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# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

May 27, 2002

## Excavating the Crimes of War



## What really happened in Jenin?

Charmaine Seitz reports

Naomi Klein explores the power of anti-Semitism

Amos Oz presents a plan for peace

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## Editorial

# Dictatorship or Democracy?

**W**hen on April 12, a cabal of business  
leaders and military officers deposed  
Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez  
and dissolved the country's National  
Assembly and Supreme Court, the Bush  
administration blamed the victim. White  
House spokesman Ari Fleisher said, "The  
actions encouraged by the Chávez govern-  
ment provoked a crisis."

Major dailies adopted the language of Big  
Brother. A *New York Times* editorial heralded  
the coup: "Venezuelan democracy is no longer  
threatened by a would-be dictator ... [Chávez]  
stepped down after the military intervened and  
handed power to a respected business leader."

The *Chicago Tribune* commented with a  
straight face: "It is not every day that a democ-  
racy benefits from the military's intervention  
to force out an elected president." (Stephen  
Chapman, the conservative columnist who  
authored that editorial also noted that  
Chávez had been "praising Osama bin  
Laden," a statement with no basis in fact.)

Forty-eight hours later, however, Chávez  
was back in power, thanks to a popular upris-  
ing that was bolstered by diplomatic pressure  
from the Organization of American States.

As many had suspected, evidence soon  
emerged that the United States appeared to be  
behind the overthrow of yet another democra-  
tically elected government in  
Latin America. Prior to the  
putsch, military and civilian  
coup leaders had visited the  
White House, State Department  
and Pentagon. Venezuelan Gen.

Lucas Romero Rincon, for exam-  
ple, met with Rogelio Pardo-Maurer, a former  
high-ranking Contra official who is now the  
Pentagon official responsible for Latin America.

Undersecretary of State for Latin America  
Otto Reich denies that the administration  
had any knowledge of or involvement in the  
coup. Lies are Reich's stock in trade. As head  
of the Office of Public Diplomacy in the mid-  
'80s, Reich, an anti-Castro Cuban, conducted  
an illegal propaganda campaign to garner  
public support for the CIA-Contra war  
against the Nicaraguan government. This  
covert operation, staffed by psychological  
operations specialists from the U.S. Army,  
intimidated journalists and news executives  
and dispersed spurious news items.

Is it a coincidence that in Venezuela a  
coordinated propaganda operation appears to  
have stoked rebellion using anti-Chávez pri-  
vate media outlets? Two days before the coup,  
the Venezuelan Program for Education

Action and Human Rights, a group that pre-  
viously had been critical of Chávez's authori-  
tarian impulses, issued this warning:

The media have played a fundamental role  
in encouraging the climate of instability by  
circulating rumors of the suspension of  
guaranteed rights and announcing an  
alleged program of government repression.  
... In a clearly provocative and illegal  
action, television channels have decided to  
exercise control over Chávez's national  
presidential broadcasts, the only communi-  
cation tool that the government possesses  
to respond to the open media conspiracy  
against it. Calls for a *golpe de estado*, the  
criminalization of left movements and  
proclamations against the supposed  
"Cubanization" of the country have all  
been redoubled in these day of permanent  
coverage in favor of the strike and the  
departure of Chávez.

Indeed, on the day of the coup, private  
media stations promoted the demonstrations  
continuously, characterizing the anti-Chávez  
demonstrators as "civil society" and labeling  
Chávez's supporters "mobs" and "hordes."

Many Venezuelans, particularly wealthier  
citizens, are unhappy with Chávez. In  
November, he decreed, and the National

## Prior to the putsch, the coup leaders visited the White House, State Department and Pentagon.

Assembly passed, 49 economic reforms. One  
of these laws requires banks to provide 15 per-  
cent of their loan portfolio to farmers, up from  
8 percent. Another distributes idle land to  
landless peasants. The end result of these mea-  
sures will result in a redistribution of wealth  
from the oligarchy to the more than 80 per-  
cent of Venezuelans who live in dire poverty.

In essence, a charismatic Chávez, carrying  
on where he says Simon Bolivar left off, has  
mobilized the disposed majority to demand  
compensation for centuries of blood, sweat  
and tears. His supporters have described this  
"Bolivarian" revolution as "an antibody" to  
the "disease of globalization." The Bush  
administration, the *New York Times* and the  
*Chicago Tribune*, perceiving a threat to the  
established order, worry that this popular  
movement might be contagious. After all,  
once it gets started, where will it stop?

—Joel Bleifuss

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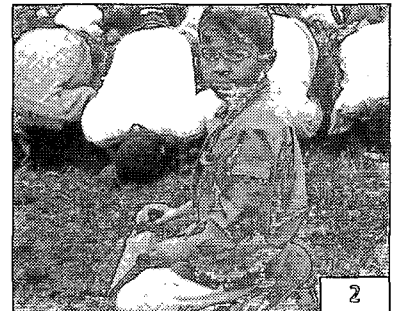
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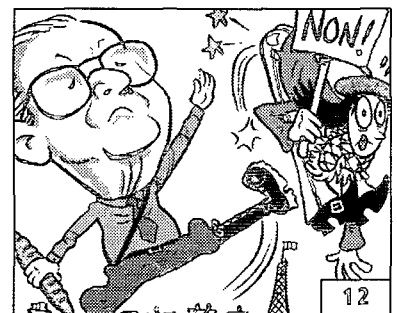
Cover photo by Scott Nelson/Getty



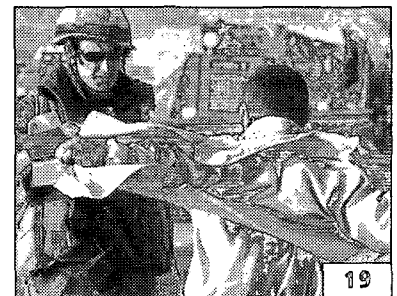
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## Springtime for Dissent

75,000 gather in Washington

By Hank Hoffman

WASHINGTON—It was overcast and rainy here much of the April 19 to 22 weekend. But for many thousands of demonstrators antiwar and global justice movement demonstrators, it felt like spring. Better than expected turnout, and a refreshing sense of regaining momentum lost, buoyed activists' spirits.

Last September 10, anti-globalization organizers were immersed in planning for end-of-the-month demonstrations against the pillars of Third World lending, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. They expected the largest and most militant U.S. expression of radical dissent since the Vietnam War.

The September 11 terror attacks stopped the movement in its tracks. In the new climate of fear, whipped-up patriotism and loosened restrictions on government repression, many were concerned that street protest would backfire.

Thus, April's protests tested the waters. The general consensus was that—despite heavy-handed police presence—the chill is gone, and the water's fine.

Police estimated the crowd at the Saturday, April 20, rally on the mall in front of the Capitol at 75,000. Many used the term "historic" to describe the vast participation by Arab- and Muslim-Americans—perhaps one-third or more of the crowd.

John Cavanagh, director of the Institute for Policy Studies, saw cooperation between the anti-war and global justice movements as marking a "new stage." As the Seattle WTO protests marked the coalescence of single-issue activism into a broader anti-corporate movement, the weekend's dissent focused on the interrelatedness of economic injustice and military oppression.

"There's a growing realization that the greatest threat to peace and stability in the world is that there are over a billion people who are poor, and the global economy has managed to make the poor poorer," Cavanagh says.

The rally was originally called to protest the Bush administration's perma-



Palestinian-Americans bow in prayer at the April 20 protests in Washington.

nent war policy, the crackdown on civil liberties and profiling of the Muslim and Arab communities. But the Mideast crisis took precedence. With a Palestinian flag draped from the side of the speakers' platform billowing in the breeze, the Israeli military occupation and its underwriting by an estimated annual \$5 billion in direct and indirect U.S. aid were condemned in equal measure.

While Saturday's rally was the largest event, it was not the only one. Over four days, marchers organized a teach-in, lobbying, rallies and civil disobedience in opposition to U.S. military aid to Colombia and for the closing of the School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Georgia. Two thousand to 3,000 anti-corporate globalization protesters met weekend meetings of the IMF and World Bank for morning rallies and street theater in front of the World Bank building. And late Monday afternoon, April 22, a few thousand supporters of Palestinian rights, hemmed in on all sides by police, protested outside the Washington Hilton Hotel, where AIPAC, a pro-Israel lobbying group, was holding a conference.

There were some notes of dissonance. On at least two occasions during the weekend, the police formed cordons around peaceful demonstrators, arbitrarily containing them until police chose to back off.

The Saturday and Monday rallies demonstrated that support for the ends—if not the means—of the Palestinian cause is deep on the left. But many were troubled by a small minority of speakers who advocated not peace and mutual recognition, but the destruction of Israel. When one speaker on Monday called for "unconditional support" for any actions taken in the name of Palestinians, some in the crowd booed.

The weekend was a success despite the fact that labor and mainstream environmental groups were not involved. And except for a couple of glaring exceptions—rival groups commandeered the stage at several rallies, for example—disparate groups worked well together. The Enron scandal, the Argentine economic meltdown under the dictates of the IMF, the clumsy Bush administration support for the abortive coup in Venezuela, and its failure to articulate a path to peace and justice in the Mideast—all combined in protesters' eyes to make the administration vulnerable on the movement's terms.

The inseparability of peace and economic justice was the message whether the topic was Colombia, Palestine, Afghanistan or a potential war with Iraq. Says Andy Burns, a young organizer with the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition, "The fist that protects and furthers U.S. economic interests is military domination." ■



## Crunch Time

### Can Nevada derail Yucca Mountain?

By Geoff Schumacher

**LAS VEGAS**—On April 8, Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn vetoed President Bush's recommendation to build a high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, setting off what will be the most intense lobbying battle in the project's 15-year history.

Nevada vehemently opposes the federal plan to dump nuclear waste 90 miles from Las Vegas. Local governments, business leaders, environmentalists and citizens are now joining the state in an all-out effort to derail the repository.

The Nevada governor was given authority in a 1982 nuclear waste policy act to veto the president's recommendation, but it can be overridden by majority votes in both houses of Congress. Congress now has 90 days to sustain or override Guinn's veto. If Congress overrides, the game is over politically for Nevada, and the Department of Energy can begin the licensing process with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Nevada has vowed, if it loses in Congress, to fight the dump aggressively in the courts.

As the congressional votes near, Nevada is taking a pragmatic approach by focusing its energies on the Senate. The GOP-controlled House is expected to override the veto by a wide margin, but the state hopes to secure 51 votes in the Senate to uphold Guinn's veto. The state is following the lead of Senate Majority Whip Harry Reid, Nevada's senior senator, a formidable power broker in the upper chamber. Reid made headlines earlier this year when he repeatedly called President Bush a liar for endorsing the repository after promising Nevadans during his 2000 campaign that he would decide the matter based on "sound science."

The lobbying is accompanied by aggressive grassroots campaigns from national and local environmental groups, from Public Citizen in Washington to Citizen Alert in Nevada, and an intense television advertising campaign. Nevada governments and private donors are spending millions of dollars to target states where senators are undecided about Yucca Mountain. The

campaign focuses on the dangers of transporting 77,000 tons of radioactive waste by rail and truck through at least 43 states and within a mile of more than 50 million Americans in order to complete the project.

The nuclear power industry is out in full force as well, arguing that the \$60 billion repository is a safer option than storing the waste at 131 current and former reactors across the country. Nuclear lobbyists have even played the patriotism card: Former White House Chief of Staff John Sununu, for example, has suggested that Nevada should embrace the repository in the name of national security.

The House was expected to vote quickly, possibly in early May, but a Senate vote likely will not be scheduled until the last minute, sometime in July. Reid and other Yucca Mountain opponents say they will use every procedural ploy available to thwart a Senate vote. Any delays will give Nevada more time to lobby senators.

In late April, Nevada officials believed they needed to sway 15 additional votes in the Senate to reach the magic number of 51—a tall order. They are counting on Reid to pull strings with his colleagues and for the television blitz to rally support for Nevada's cause in other states, thereby changing the equation for those senators predisposed to support Yucca. Nevada is betting that senators will rethink their positions once constituents in their home states start calling. ■

## Fire Sale

### To fund "clean elections," Mass. judge orders state property sold

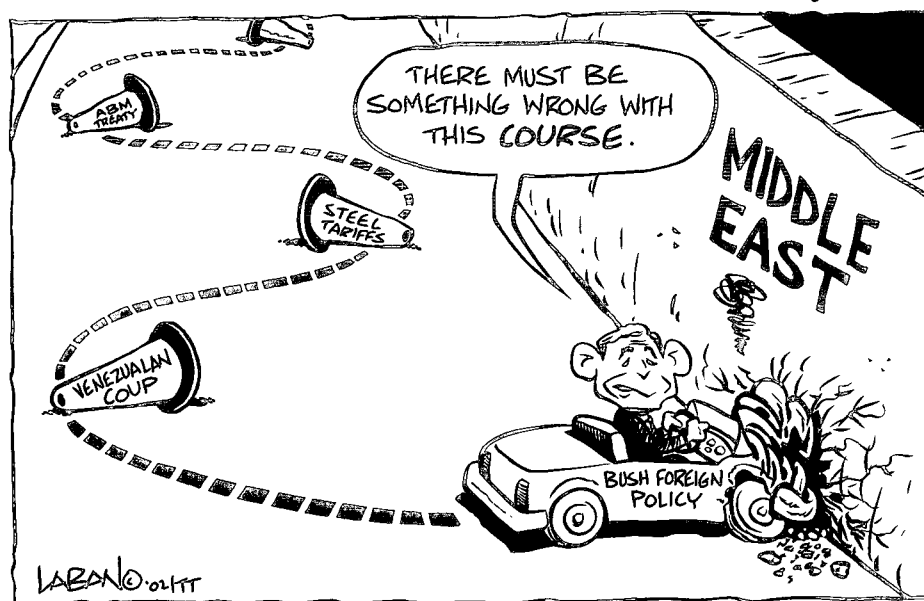
By Micah L. Sifry

What if the people pass a law by initiative, and the legislature refuses to implement it? That question has confronted Massachusetts ever since November 1998, when, by a margin of 2 to 1, voters enacted a "clean elections" system of comprehensive public financing for all state campaigns. The victory was part of a wave of clean elections successes that began in Maine in 1996 and spread to Vermont and Arizona within the next two years.

In Massachusetts, the clean elections law was supposed to take effect in time for this year's elections. But House Speaker Thomas Finneran and a pack of conservative Democrats have done everything they can to strangle the law, leading to an extraordinary constitutional crisis that has yet to be resolved.

At first, it seemed that Massachusetts was on course. In 1999 and 2000, the legislature set aside a total of \$20 million toward the implementation of the law, which was originally estimated to cost \$40 million for a full election cycle. As

Terry LaBan





the 2002 cycle began, a number of prominent candidates declared their intention to participate and set about collecting the 200 to 6,000 small contributions of not more than \$100, depending on the office, that they need to qualify for clean elections funding.

But trouble was brewing. Entrenched incumbents, used to little or no opposition (70 percent of Massachusetts legislative races go uncontested), started worrying that the law could undermine them. Last spring, the man at the top of that pyramid of career politicians, Finneran, pushed through legislation eliminating further appropriations for the system. He claimed that voters didn't know what they were doing when they supported the law (in the face of polls that show an even greater number—70 percent—backing it now).

When a few moderate legislators in the heavily Democratic chamber dared to cross him by voting to fully fund clean elections, one of Finneran's lieutenants retaliated by selectively cutting projects in their districts. With the support of the state's Republican governor, advocates

fought hard for the money, but ultimately the 2002 state budget passed with no additional clean elections funds in it. Worse, the legislature refused to release the money it had previously set aside, which now amounted to \$23 million thanks to interest accrued.

That's when Mass Voters for Clean Elections, along with a group of prospective clean elections candidates, voters, and the state's Republican and Green parties, turned to the courts. In February, the state Supreme Court ruled that the legislature had to either fully fund or repeal the clean elections law, under the provision of the state constitution dealing with laws made by popular initiative.

Since then, the legislature, under Finneran's firm leadership, has refused to do either. So the court, in a second ruling, has given clean elections advocates the unprecedented power to seize state property and auction it off to raise the money needed to fund candidates' campaigns. The first auction, of two state-owned 2001 Ford Expedition SUVs, along with several 2002 Ford station wagons, is taking place on April 28. "We're seizing late

model cars with a high resale value," says David Donnelly of Mass Voters, "so as to cause as little disruption to the taxpayers as possible."

Mass Voters and its legal counselors at the National Voting Rights Institute are also exploring selling off state-owned furniture in Speaker Finneran's office, as well as the furniture of two of his top allies. "Taking a love seat is not a hindrance to the legislative process," Donnelly told reporters. This bit of populist revenge has garnered mostly supportive editorials in the press. Even the conservative *Boston Herald* wants to see the law implemented and blames Finneran for the spectacle. Finneran's chief-of-staff has counter-sued to protect his boss's upholstery. Finneran himself has blustered that he doesn't need any furniture, since he mostly works on his feet.

While Massachusetts deadlocked, Maine, Vermont and Arizona all implemented their clean elections systems. As a result, all three saw promising results in their first run-through in 2000, including more contested races, more women and minority candidates, more time spent in grassroots campaigning, and the election of a substantial number of less-beholden legislators—one-third of Maine's legislature and one-fifth of Arizona's.

Those changes, in turn, helped make even more significant legislative campaigns possible. In 1999, Maine's legislature put price controls on prescription drugs (not fearing retribution from pharmaceutical companies in the next election), and last year it moved closer to adopting a single-payer health care system. In Arizona, the freshman class of "clean" legislators was able to change a key rule that had kept some bills forever stalled in committee, with the result that the state has finally opted into a federal program subsidizing health insurance for children.

Now, about 75 percent of all candidates in Maine and Arizona have signed up to run clean in 2002. The fact that they don't have to take a dime from moneyed interests means that lobbyists have to relate to them differently. "Their approach is 'May we talk to you and share some information,' not 'I did something for you, now you owe me,'" says Arizona state Rep. Jim Sedillo. Or as Maine state Sen. Beth Edmonds, the chairwoman of

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





her chamber's Labor Committee, says, "When we're dealing with workers' compensation, none of the 50 insurance companies lining the back of the hearing room—none of them—have any ownership of me."

News like that has kept reformers in Massachusetts motivated, despite the unbelievable intransigence coming from the legislature. When the car auction was announced, Mass Voters' Donnelly pointed out that all three branches of the state's government had the power to step in and break the impasse over clean elections. The legislature could release the \$23 million sitting in the treasury that it had previously earmarked for the system; the courts could issue a ruling seizing that "cash property"; or the governor could invoke her emergency powers and release the funds.

One way or another, the 30 or so candidates still seeking to run "clean" will get their funds—though there's no doubt in Massachusetts that Finneran's shenanigans have drastically crippled the law for this cycle. Ultimately, the voters will have to take their revenge at the ballot box. ■

**Micah L. Sifry**, *Public Campaign's senior analyst*, is the author of *Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America* (Routledge).

## Workers Wronged

### The NLRB is stacked against labor

By Tula Connell

WASHINGTON—Two new appointees to the National Labor Relations Board clearly indicate that safeguarding workers rights is far from a top priority for the Bush administration.

In January, President Bush used the congressional recess to name two pro-business appointees, Michael Bartlett and William Cowen, to the board. The appointments, which did not receive Senate approval, leave one spot vacant on the five-member board.

Bartlett was most recently director of labor law policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He was also vice president for employee relations and labor counsel at Eastern Airlines in the '80s, at a time when the airline's CEO refused to arbitrate with 8,000 striking machinists—starting a crisis that eventually led to Eastern's bankruptcy. Cowen is founder and principal attorney for Institutional Labor Advisors, which provides "union avoidance" advice for its primarily coal-mining clients.

The changes in the NLRB are a "sign of the Bush administration's unwillingness to maintain any kind of balance at the nation's top agency mandated with safeguarding workers' rights," says AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney. Since the Senate did not have a chance to approve the appointments, the terms for the new members will expire whenever Congress adjourns its 2002 session, most likely in the fall.

The NLRB is among several agencies whose appointees garner little attention, but who ultimately have a great impact on labor policy during their five-year terms. The NLRB certifies union elections, rules on labor law violations, and decides such issues as whether certain categories of workers can be included in collective bargaining units.

Since the '80s, the NLRB has seen a sharp increase in appointees with corporate backgrounds. Of the 24 members appointed to the board since 1983, 11 have come from management, including the two newest. Only three appointees in the same time period had some connection with labor, including current board member Wilma Liebman, who worked in the legal departments of the Teamsters and Bricklayers. Liebman's term expires in December.

The two new appointees join Liebman and Peter Hurtgen, who has sided with management in virtually all of the non-unanimous cases he has considered since being ap-

### ANWR Drilling Defeated

The Senate voted 54 to 46 against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on April 17 following an intense lobbying campaign by environmental groups. All but five Democrats joined eight Republicans in voting against the project, touted by supporters as a national security measure, which would have opened the refuge to oil exploration. The refuge is the last 5 percent of Alaska's North Slope that remains environmentally protected.

"I think it really comes down to this," Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle said after the defeat. "We are just not going to allow Republicans to destroy the environment."

The ANWR proposal was part of a larger energy bill currently under consideration in the Senate that includes \$14 billion in tax credits for makers of energy-efficient hybrid cars and appliances, as well as support for a natural gas pipeline that would funnel existing reserves along Alaska's southern coast to the United States. The pipeline, which could cost as much as \$40 billion to construct, has the support of some environmental groups. "We'd much prefer to see them go after these known gas reserves than continue to bang at the door of the Arctic refuge," Melinda Pierce, a lobbyist for the Sierra Club, said after the pipeline amendment was added.

As *In These Times* went to press, the Senate was expected to pass the bill within days. It will then head to committee to be reconciled with a very different House version, passed in August last year.

### A Corporate Takeover

Philadelphia's School Reform Commission voted 3 to 2 in late April to hand over control of 42 troubled public schools to private firms. The schools will be managed by three for-profit companies and two universities beginning in September. Edison, the for-profit educational company that is lead consultant to the city's Reform Commission (see "Private Schooling," February 18, 2002), will receive 20 of those schools. Another 28 schools will be converted to charters or "reconstituted" entirely.

The decision faced vigorous protest from Philadelphia community groups. Students shouted "Shame!" and "I am not for sale!" at the meeting where the vote was held. Earlier in the day, a new location had to be announced for the meeting after students succeeded in blockading the district's headquarters, where the meeting was to be held.

A similar experiment to turn over 32 schools in Hartford, Connecticut in the mid-'90s failed within two years.

—Kristie Reilly



pointed in 1997. Yet even he is opposed by the fanatically antiunion National Right to Work Committee for being insufficiently hostile to union representation fees. Hurtgen's term will also expire when Congress adjourns this fall, and, as a result of the NRWC's opposition, the Bush administration has not renominated him.

With a rabidly pro-business NLRB in the works, employer groups such as the Labor Policy Association are assembling lists of recent decisions they would like to see overturned. Among them: the ability of temporary workers or resident interns to be part of a bargaining unit voting on union representation, and the right of nonunion employees to have a co-worker present during employers' investigative interviews.

Fred Feinstein, NLRB general counsel from 1994 to 1999, says the new board is likely to change the course of labor policy in new decisions. Cases that may come

before the NLRB in the near future, Feinstein says, involve using e-mail at the workplace and establishing rules for telecommuters and those working out of their homes and cars. With a Bush-appointed board, management and property rights will outweigh employee and privacy rights in the use of e-mail and other issues—making organizing the “virtual” workplace virtually impossible.

In coming months, the Senate will take up confirmation of R. Alex Acosta, who is meant to replace Cowen. Acosta is a former associate with the law firm Kirkland & Ellis, where Kenneth Starr is a partner. In 1997, he founded the Project on the Judiciary to oppose the “increasing activism of the federal judiciary”—a need which apparently ended with the 2000 elections, when the project was terminated. In a Senate that has killed only one Bush administration nomination, Charles W. Pickering—and that only after a huge

nationwide effort by activists—it seems unlikely Acosta will be turned down.

Acosta's project was an arm of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, whose goal is to “reinforce the bond between the Judeo-Christian moral tradition and the public debate over domestic and foreign policy issues.” He would not be the first NLRB member seeking to marry religion to public policy—in December, after pressure from activists, J. Robert Brame withdrew his name from consideration for chairman of the NLRB. A management attorney, Brame was on the NLRB from 1997 to 2000 and has served in high leadership positions at the Plymouth Rock Foundation and American Vision groups—both of which advocate replacing the Constitution with “Biblical law.”

Also up for consideration is an NLRB board chairperson. So far, Bush is keeping the names of potential nominees under tight wraps. ■

### Dead Peasants 6.1

Back in 1994, Wal-Mart launched a program promising its employees a \$5,000 death benefit. The company was so determined its workers should take advantage of the program that it threatened any who turned it down with the forfeiture of their health insurance. What the company did not tell employees was that it had taken out life insurance policies on them, with Wal-Mart as the beneficiary.

Now lawyers in Texas are mounting a class-action suit against Wal-Mart to reclaim the benefits—as much as \$64,000 apiece—for the estates of dead employees. Life insurance policies for employees, sometimes referred to as “dead peasant policies,” are not uncommon among large U.S. corporations, who use them as a tax dodge. The policies are legal in many states, but not in Texas. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, 5 to 6 million corporate serfs have life insurance policies held on them by Fortune 500 magnates, and Wal-Mart holds some 350,000.

### Extreme Photos, Pt. I 6.2

Here's a kindly tip for all you edgy shutterbugs out there: If you're going to shoot controversial material—dead

bodies, say—develop your own damn film. It is a lesson Thomas Condon, a suburban Cincinnati commercial photographer, will get to mull in the pokey. Condon thoughtlessly dropped off some film he had taken in the Hamilton County Morgue, and his local photo lab dropped a dime to the cops. Now Condon's doing two and a half years for “gross abuse of a corpse.”

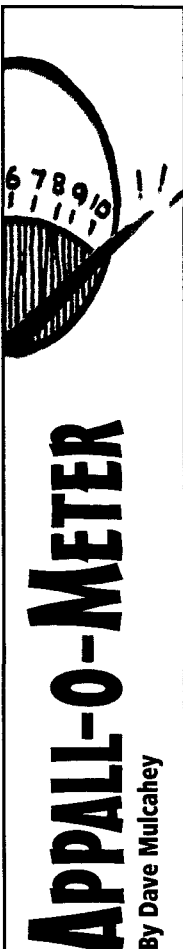
Bereaved families were outraged to learn that the mortal remains of their loved ones were posed with props such as sheet music, a key and an apple. Condon argued that he intended to crop the photos to hide the identities of the corpses, and that the pictures were part of a “brutally honest” artistic project. That cut no ice with Judge Norbert Nadel. “They're not art,” he said of the photos. “They're sick, they're disgusting, they're disrespectful, and really the worst invasion of privacy.”

Actually, the worst invasion of privacy may have been carried out by police and prosecutors, who released the photos to the public, and by local television stations, who broadcast them. “They didn't care,” Condon told

Cincinnati's *City Beat*. “And they're calling me reckless.”

### Extreme Photos, Pt. II 6.9

Another tip: Guns don't kill people. Dipshit gun enthusiasts kill people. Angela Aho, a 20-year-old Minnesota college student, died from a bullet to the head she suffered during a homework photo shoot. According to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Aho and a fellow student had asked Brett Lessard, 24, a friend (and, coincidentally, the son of a Minnesota state senator), to pose for them. After shooting pictures of Lessard and his dog, Aho wanted something more dramatic. Lessard thought it might be cool to point his Glock handgun at the camera. As he raised his arm, the gun fired a bullet through Aho's eye, killing her.



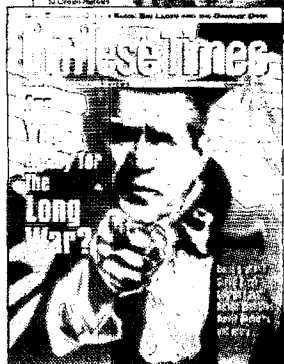
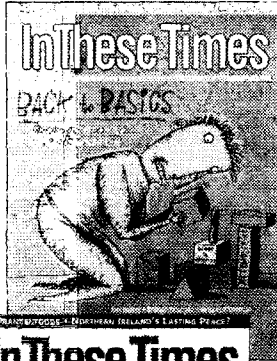
By Dave Mulcahey



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## In Delaware, Not Easy Being Green

By Ariel Lindorff

As a longtime environmental activist with a flair for the dramatic, Alan Muller is used to having an audience. However, when he stenciled a warning onto a combined sewage overflow (CSO) pipe in Wilmington, Delaware, his audience was not exactly friendly.

Several carloads of police, forewarned by a press release indicating Muller's intent, waited patiently for him to finish stenciling a warning onto the sewage overflow pipe—and then they arrested him.

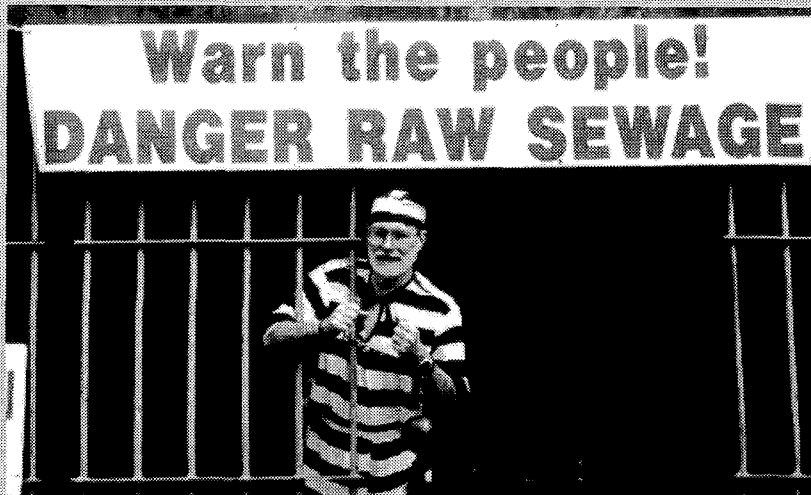
Under federal regulations, such a warning is required, but the city has been ignoring those rules since they went into effect in 1995. For his efforts, Muller has been charged with criminal mischief and graffiti and faces a maximum penalty of a fine and up to two months in jail.

Muller has long been protesting hazardous sewage overflows. He says there are about 38 such overflows in Delaware, at least six of them—all unlabeled—located in state parks. All together, they dump about 1.5 million gallons of raw sewage per year into local waterways. Untreated sewage, he notes, poses numerous health risks, including the threat of serious diseases such as meningitis and hepatitis.

Delaware has long been viewed by environmentalists as something of a company state, run by and for the giant DuPont Corporation. And Delaware's permissive statutes on corporate taxes and charters encourage most American corporations—as many as 65 percent to 75 percent—to call the state home.

Muller says state and local governments in Delaware are little more than "corporate service organizations." His group, Green Delaware, says that the state "poses special challenges" to environmental activists because of "its traditions of control by the chemical industry, paternalistic, anti-democratic style of government, and determination to remain a preferred legal home for corporations everywhere."

Muller has no problem with challenging, even ridiculing state authorities. And he is no stranger to arrest.



Alan Muller dresses the part.

In January 2001, he was arrested while sitting at the back of the hall of the state House of Representatives. Though he was a registered lobbyist who was just doing what dozens of others were also doing, Muller was dragged off in handcuffs by police and charged with criminal trespassing and disorderly conduct. The charges were later thrown out in court.

More recently, after his arrest for stenciling the "raw sewage" warning, Muller decided to attend some of his meetings with state representatives in a costume-shop jail uniform.

Muller's trial, originally scheduled for March 25, has been postponed indefinitely because of an illness in the attorney general's family.

Meanwhile, there has been a motion by another prosecutor, an assistant attorney general, to quash the subpoenas of Muller's lawyer, Al Greto.

Greto's witness list included senators who had participated in a CSO task force several years ago, employees of the city of Wilmington, and individuals qualified to elaborate on EPA regulations. ■

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# Manufacturing Postfeminism

By Susan J. Douglas

I'm sitting here, in one hand *Vogue's* April edition called "The Shape Issue," featuring Angelina Jolie ("Rebel with a Cause," we're told) on the cover, and in the other *Time's* April 15 issue devoted to the question of "Babies vs. Career." (*Time* promises to offer women "The harsh facts about fertility.") Thirty years after the height of the women's movement, here we are: *Vogue* tells us "How to Change Your Shape from Head to Toe" and *Time* warns us that if we get settled in a career first and then try to have kids, we are doomed to childlessness. And I'm sitting here thinking: This is it. This is postfeminism in action.

In October 1982, when the *New York Times Magazine* featured an article titled "Voices From the Post-Feminist Generation," a term was coined, and ever since the women of America have heard, ceaselessly, that we are, and forevermore will be, in a postfeminist age.

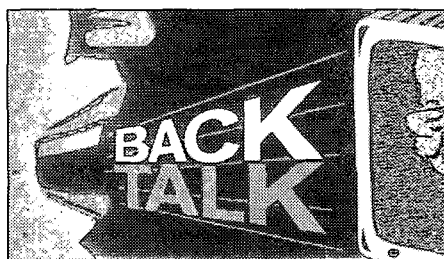
What the hell is postfeminism, anyway? I would think it would refer to a time when complete gender equality has been achieved. That hasn't happened, of course, but we (especially young women) are supposed to think it has. Postfeminism, as a term, suggests that women have made plenty of progress because of feminism, but that feminism is now irrelevant and even undesirable because it has made millions of women unhappy, unfeminine, childless, lonely, and bitter, prompting them to fill their closets with combat boots and really bad India print skirts.

But to perpetuate this "common sense" about feminism and postfeminism requires the weekly and monthly manufacturing of consent. Postfeminism is, in fact, an ongoing engineering process promoted most vigorously by the right, but aided and abetted all along the way by the corporate media. Postfeminism is crucial to the corporate media because they rely on advertising.

If millions of women stopped and said, "Hey, I don't think I need lipstick, Lestil, Oil of Olay, Victoria's Secret boulder holders, Diet Coke, L'Oreal or Ultra Slim-Fast anymore," that would

lead to a serious advertising revenue shortfall. So the media must continue to manufacture postfeminism as the common sense way to understand women's current place in American society. This April we got an excellent snapshot of how this process works.

*Vogue's* first-ever "Shape Issue celebrates the female form in all its glorious



variety." These varieties include tall, short, curvy, pregnant and thin. Except that they are all size two (the "curvy" model, a socialite, is a size eight to 10). Even the pregnant model, who is nineteen, and would rather "flaunt my belly than hide it," is a size two.

The letter from the editor acknowledges that "we receive countless letters attacking the models for the way they look. 'Too skinny' is the usual complaint." But then she huffs about a "simple truth": "To be slim and fit is healthier than to be seriously overweight and out of shape." Well, that settles that. Our choices as women are anorexic versus blimp.

It is *Vogue's* job (and the job of countless other women's magazines) to remind women that their most important task is to police the boundaries of their bodies. This regulation, we are reminded, requires considerable time, mental energy and attention. Crucial to *Vogue's* strategy is to acknowledge women's quite legitimate charges that the magazine promotes an unattainable and, in fact, unhealthy body image. *Vogue* then asserts that such charges are false and wrong, and that the true progressive position for women (because it's healthy—don't you love it?) is to embrace hyper-thinness as a body ideal. Postfeminism in action:

reconfigure anti-feminism as feminism.

In "Making Time for a Baby," *Time's* point is clear: women who pursue a career first and postpone having children too long will end up barren and miserable. In the past 20 years, the print screams, there has been a "100% rise in childless women ages 40-44." (No detailed interviews here with women who are happily kid-free.)

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, author of the book *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*, on which the article is based, argues for structural changes in the workplace to make family life and work more compatible. But the emphasis in *Time*—and this is also absolutely central to postfeminism—is the notion that whatever challenges women face in juggling work and family are their individual struggles, to be conquered through good planning, smart choices, and an upbeat outlook.

We hear about the deep, "private sorrow" of childlessness for some professional women. But there is no comparative data here about how countries like Denmark or the Netherlands, just to pick two, through admittedly high taxes, provide all kinds of support services to mothers and, in fact, make it not just possible but

**It is *Vogue's* job to remind women that their most important task is to police the boundaries of their bodies.**

customary for women to work and have kids. (How does one year's paid maternity leave sound, girls?)

But postfeminism also rests on the notion that neither the government nor corporate America can or should offer any support to parents for the common good of raising the next generation.

So the next time you see yet another media text telling women to shut up, look pretty, go on a diet, abandon your career and other aspirations, have more babies and have them young, remember that you are witnessing just the latest assembly-line products of that huge and highly successful industry, Postfeminism Inc. ■

# Venezuela Divided

*Hugo Chávez is back in power. Now what?*

By Steve Ellner

CARACAS, VENEZUELA

**C**ulminating three days of a general strike and violence on the streets of Caracas that left scores of casualties, the Venezuelan military forced President Hugo Chávez from office. The action did not come as a surprise, given the increasing aggressiveness of the opposition, which includes Venezuela's largest business and labor organizations, media outlets and political parties. But then a counter-coup, which ousted provisional President Pedro Carmona and invited Chávez back to power, surprised the entire nation and the world. Political satirists now call Carmona, who was in power less than 48 hours, "Pedro the Brief."

When the fiery Chávez returned to power, he might have been expected to come down hard on his adversaries, especially those who had accepted positions in the interim government. But when the weary-eyed leader arrived at the presidential palace in the wee hours of the morning of April 14, he immediately took a conciliatory tone.

In a press conference the next day, Chávez pledged himself to "rectification," called on his adversaries to do the same, and exhorted the media to show greater impartiality. Chávez admitted his error in firing seven top executives of the state-run oil firm, who had instigated a slowdown to protest the alleged infiltration of the company by Chávez backers. He also apologized to two leading journalists, who had been critical of his government, for having disparaged their dead fathers. Finally, he recognized that his aggressive style had led to unnecessary clashes with other institutions such as the Catholic Church.

While the president of the national labor confederation and other members of the opposition have accepted the president's call for dialogue, others continue to insist on Chávez's exit from power and propose a national referendum to decide the matter. They argue that the massive anti-government march of 300,000 people (whose size has been exaggerated in both directions) on the day of the coup represented a "plebiscite" in favor of Chávez's removal. But the opposite can also be argued. Opposition leaders fail to acknowledge that the poor, who took to the streets demanding Chávez's return to power, outnumber the middle class—five to one.

**T**he polarization that pit the pro-Chavista poor against the anti-Chavistas reached a peak during the events leading up to the coup. For several previous months, street mobilizations



OSCAR SABBETTA/GETTY

The graffiti reads: "The People Triumph and Chávez is Back."

against Chávez were a regular phenomenon in the affluent, eastern part of Caracas. But equal numbers of Venezuelans turned out to show their support for the president, usually in the poverty-stricken west and downtown areas.

Fedecamaras, the nation's main business organization, headed by Carmona, and the national leadership of the main labor confederation, the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers, led the anti-Chávez protests. On April 9, the two organizations called a 24-hour general strike, which continued indefinitely. On the third day, they organized a march from the wealthy western sectors of Caracas toward the presidential palace to demand Chávez's resignation. The turnout was far greater than expected.

Once downtown, gunfire broke out resulting in scores of casualties and 17 deaths, both protesters and Chavistas. The firing came from three sources: a group of government supporters, police who were in between the pro- and anti-Chavistas, and from snipers in the buildings overlooking both gatherings. Exactly who began the shooting has yet to be determined. The opposition blames Chavista paramilitary groups, while the president's supporters claim that the reactionary "Red Flag Party" and Caracas police (under the direction of the city's anti-Chavista mayor) opened fire first.

Top military officers declared that they would not repress the people, and, to avoid further disorder, they arrested Chávez and turned power over to Carmona. Some of the president's military supporters wanted to fight back, but Chávez insisted on avoiding bloodshed. Just why Carmona ended up as provisional president is still a matter of speculation. But business representatives and several conservative politicians predominated in his new government. Many officers who had been



assured that the military and popular leaders would be equally represented quickly expressed misgivings.

Carmona immediately decreed the abolition of democratic institutions such as the National Assembly, and granted himself the right to select and remove governors and mayors. Another decree suspended a series of laws passed by Chávez. Carmona promised to hold elections within one year and not to run as a presidential candidate. He justified these moves by claiming that the people had given him a popular mandate.

It was as if the Bourbons had returned to the throne. On the evening of April 12, Carmona's first day in office, anti-Chavista journalist and ex-politician Teodoro Petkoff called the new government "plutocratic" on national television. The following day a neutral, pro-democratic current in the armed forces united with the Chavistas, who were strongest among mid-level officers, and took control of military installations throughout the country. Carmona, who was in Caracas' Fort Tiuna to swear in the new military command, was forced to publicly resign and announce his acceptance of Chávez's return.

The stark contrast between the haves and have-nots was especially evident in their reactions to the coup. The enormous march that led to Chávez's overthrow consisted of members of the upper and middle classes. But on the night of Carmona's first day in office, poor people banged on pots and pans from their windows, a protest that has come to signify opposition to government. The following day the poor "came down from the hills" (as Venezuelans say), overtook the presidential palace and surrounded Fort Tiuna.

Most politicians and political commentators here and abroad attribute the nation's political crisis to Chávez's aggressive style, inflexibility and intolerance. While these traits certainly have aggravated tensions, they are not at the heart of the polarization that has overwhelmed the nation. Economic and class issues lurk just below the surface. Indeed, the agrarian reform, the state-run health system, modifications in the system of severance pay and other reforms enacted by Chávez have been popular banner issues going back more than 50 years, and have always been staunchly opposed by the business elite.

Last year, the economic stagnation and decline of oil prices thrust economic issues onto center stage. The opposition parties went on the offensive, particularly after September 11. Not only

***Washington carefully avoided the term "coup," referring to Chávez's ousters as a "transitional government."***

did they accuse Chávez of being anti-American due to his opposition to the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, but held him responsible for the dearth of foreign investments in Venezuela because of his radical language and confrontational style. Chávez reacted by radicalizing his own positions. In November, Chávez pushed through 49 laws in one fell swoop. Among them were far-reaching reforms such as a law that prohibited foreign control of oil-producing operations and an agrarian reform that threatened property owners with land redistribution.

Business spokesmen accused Chávez of railroading this legislation through Congress, which he had converted into a rubber-stamp body. The criticism had validity. Chávez failed to barnstorm the nation to educate the public and generate enthusiasm for the measures, as he had two years earlier for ratification of a new constitution. Such a strategy might have strengthened Chávez's position against the interest groups opposed to his legislation. But business groups did not oppose the laws because Chávez had violated democratic procedures or used offensive language. The content of the legislation is what mattered.

The Venezuelan media also vehemently oppose Chávez. During the three-day strike, the national TV channels suspended their regular programming and exclusively broadcast the anti-government point of view. On April 12, the day Carmona's de facto government was installed, well-known Chavistas were physically attacked by mobs outside their homes and hauled off by police. Television showed appalling images of a throng of middle-class Venezuelans grabbing the hair of Minister of Interior Ramón Rodríguez Chacín and shouting "handcuff him," as police escorted him to a paddy wagon. The national networks, which prior to the coup had condemned Chavista gatherings for clashing with anti-government protesters on the streets, made no comments about these persecutions.

In a typical blame-the-victim line of reasoning, President Bush attributed the coup to Chávez's poor rule. Washington carefully avoided the term "coup" and instead referred to those who replaced Chávez as a "transitional government." Far more troublesome is evidence that the White House actually encouraged the military to act. A Defense Department official told the *New York Times* that members of the Bush administration had met with conspirators prior to the coup: "We were not discouraging people. We were sending informal, subtle signals that we don't like this guy. We didn't say, 'No, don't you dare,' and we weren't advocates saying, 'Here's some arms; we'll help you overthrow this guy.'"

In Caracas, three deputies belonging to Chávez's party claim to have proof implicating U.S. officials in the coup attempt. One of the deputies, Juan Barreto, declared: "It is very probable that some sectors of the U.S. government, confused and without official authorization, aided the coup, but I do not believe that the U.S. government itself is an enemy of Venezuela."

At a press conference on Chávez's second day back in power, a foreign journalist asked the president if he thought he was overthrown because he had "strayed too far from the Washington consensus." Chávez avoided answering the question directly and responded by reaffirming Venezuela's democratic credentials. Several days later, Chávez stated that he preferred to give the Washington "the benefit of the doubt" and did not want to "take for granted ... the veracity of published information" regarding U.S. involvement.

Chávez's new tone may signal that his "revolution" has reverted to a more moderate stage. His restrained language could spell the opening of a national debate in which the middle class, among others, discuss the complexity of the predicaments facing the nation. If so, this would be fortunate for Venezuela. Because if a "revolution" is underway, as the Chavistas claim, it is not about style and rhetoric, but rather about the pressing social and economic divide. ■

*Steve Ellner is the co-editor of Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era: Class, Polarization and Conflict, to be released shortly by Lynne Rienner Publishers.*

# RIGHT AGAIN

## LE PEN'S STRONG SHOWING LEAVES THE FRENCH LEFT IN DISARRAY

BY DOUG IRELAND

**B**y defeating Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in the April 21 first round of France's presidential elections to become the only candidate in the runoff against conservative President Jacques Chirac, the neo-fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen has dramatically underscored the insidious rise of rampant racism engulfing Continental Europe. He has confirmed for skeptics the dangers posed by the mushrooming growth of xenophobic, ultra-nationalist parties of the extreme right from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, and shaken France's democratic institutions to their very core.

One in five French voters, in the privacy of the voting booth, chose one of the two neo-fascist parties (Le Pen's National Front, which rolled up an impressive 16.9 percent, and the tiny splinter party of former Le Pen deputy Bruno Megret, which got 2.4 percent). Le Pen is the linear descendant of Vichy France's collaborationists with the Nazis (he got his start in politics as a young lieutenant in the crypto-fascist political formation led in the '50s by Tixier-Vignancourt, the lawyer for Marshal Petain at his treason trial); a notorious anti-Semite (he wrote a forward to the neo-Nazi tract published by Franz Schönhuber, the former SS officer and leader of Germany's fascist Republican Party in the '70s and '80s—later declared illegal); an ex-paratrooper who tortured Algerians during the former French colony's war for independence; and a politician whose bashing of France's Arab and black African immigrant population is his stock in trade.

Le Pen won nearly a million votes more than his score in the 1995 contest for chief of state, despite the toll the actuarial charts have taken on his traditional core electoral base of nostalgics of Vichy and the Latin mass (and despite the presence of other candidates who nibbled away at his vote, including Megret; Jean Saint-Josse, leader of the Hunting-Fishing-Nature-Tradition Party, which casts itself as the representative of rural interests—4.3 percent; and Christine Bottin, a demagogue of the Catholic right—1.5 percent).

Now France is faced with the nauseating choice between Le Pen and the odiferous Chirac, who has been named in eight separate investigations of political corruption, and who has been saved from likely indictment and trial only by his presidential immunity. In the days after Le Pen's victory, France was engulfed by largely spontaneous demonstrations in the principal cities across the country, the first wave led by tens of thousands of *lycéens*, most not of voting age, chanting their favorite slogan: "Votez escroc, pas Facho!" ("Vote for the crook, not the fascist!").

Chirac will be re-elected without difficulty (and thus stay out of jail for another seven years), thanks to the support of the left



parties, who have called for "blocking the road" to Le Pen by voting for their recent adversary. This bizarre spectacle is made even more so by the recent revelation that, at a secret meeting during Chirac's 1988 campaign against Socialist President Francois Mitterand, Chirac sought Le Pen's support in the runoff. In that same campaign, in an appeal to the racist vote, Chirac referred to the bad "odors" of the immigrants (even the cuisine-mad French didn't believe him when he later tried to explain that he was only talking about their cooking).

**O**mnia Gallia in tres partes divisa est, says the adage known to every Latin student—all Gaul is divided into three parts, and that is true of the French political landscape today. Only a third of France's registered voters cast a ballot for the traditional governing parties of the left and right; another third either abstained or cast blank ballots (a record in French presidential elections); while the remaining third cast a protest vote for one of the minor party presidential candidates in the unusually crowded field of 16.

This slap-in-the-face rejection of the political establishment of left and right by two-thirds of the potential electorate, which



allowed Le Pen his breakthrough, is dominating political debate in the European press and provoking a recomposition of the French political scene. Most significant, however, is the debacle of Jospin's governing "plural left" coalition. Jospin's calculation that he could win the presidency (which he lost in 1995 by 6 percent) by governing to the center-right on economic matters was proven wrong.

Instead he created legions of alienated left voters who wanted to kick the Socialists back to the left, inflating the combined score of two Trotskyist candidates—Arlette Laguiller, perennial candidate for three decades of the ultra-sectarian Workers' Struggle Party; and Olivier Bésancenot, an attractive 28-year-old mailman put forward by Alain Krivine's less-strident Revolutionary Communist League (LCR)—to a surprising 10 percent.

The Communist Party in particular paid for its participation in Jospin's government, losing part of its electorate to the Trotskyists and part to Le Pen. The party that was once France's largest achieved only a pitiful 3.4 percent—and by failing to win the 5 percent of the vote necessary to keep its public campaign subsidies (after having lost most of its remaining mayoralties—a key patronage source—to the right in last year's municipal elections) is now on life support. Indignity of indignities, the Communists are even considering merger with their former sworn enemies, the Trots of the LCR, to create a new party "on the left of the left."

Jospin's other important coalition partner, the Greens, also saw their score drop to just over 5 percent, losing four points from their last national electoral outing (in the elections for the European Parliament). Le Pen got twice as many working-class voters as Jospin did, according to exit polls, and also a majority of the unemployed (53 percent). And, with opinion polls having shown that between two-thirds and three-quarters of the electorate could find no difference between the programs of Chirac and Jospin, many disgusted left voters simply stayed home or waited for the runoff—having been assured by all the pollsters that it would be a Jospin-Chirac duel. That too helped Le Pen beat Jospin by just 195,000 votes.

Jospin (and his allies) were thus penalized for having failed to learn the lesson of Italian politics—that when a government of the left carries out the economic policies of the right (a fact of which Jospin brutally reminded the electorate at the beginning of the campaign, when he agreed to the privatization of the publicly owned electricity company), the subsequent disillusionment opens the door to the extreme right.

Deposed by the race-baiting Silvio Berlusconi and his extreme-right allies (the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale and the xenophobic Northern League), the Party of Democratic Socialism and its coalition partners in Italy have been relegated to the sidelines in the struggle against Berlusconi's attempt to create a corporate-media state. But in March, a remarkable revolt of Italian "civil society," disgusted with the flaccid impotence of the traditional left parties, saw the birth of a nearly spontaneous mass movement in protest against Berlusconi's policies.

A group of women—some veterans of the 1968 student rebellions, some never before political—sparked the new protest movement when, in conscious imitation of the *tricoteuses* of the French Revolution, they created the *girotondo*—demonstrations encircling the buildings that house threatened political institutions (the Justice and Education ministries, the headquarters of Italy's three public television networks and the like).

The agitation, spread by word of mouth and the Internet, was given a further boost when the popular film director Nanni Moretti used the microphone at a rally sponsored by the center-left Olive Tree coalition to denounce its political leadership for their feeble irrelevance. Soon, intellectuals (normally absent from Italian public life) and former judges evicted by Berlusconi for trying to pursue political corruption and tax fraud cases against him and his business associates—all emerged as leaders of the new movement, which organized huge demonstrations in the major cities on the peninsula, their ranks swelled by people from all social classes.

This unexpected revolt created the climate in which Sergio Cofferati, the leader of Italy's largest union federation (the CGIL) felt confident enough to call a one-day, eight-hour general strike on April 15, to protest Berlusconi's attempt to elimi-

## **One in five French voters, in the privacy of the voting booth, chose one of the two neo-fascist parties.**

nate a law protecting workers from being fired "without just cause." The strike paralyzed the entire country and drew 3 million Italians into the streets to demonstrate—and Cofferati has now become the most important leader of the civil contestation.

April also saw good news from Hungary, where Istvan Csurka's extreme-right MIEP party won less than 5 percent of the parliamentary vote—but only because conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orban had adopted its xenophobic and ultra-nationalist themes, including making menacing expansionist noises about the ancient Hungarian lands of the Sudetenland and Transylvania. Thankfully, Orban was beaten by a left-center coalition of the Socialists (ex-Communists) and the Free Democrats (ex-*refuseniks*)—if only by an eyelash.

But on the same day Le Pen won in France, the German *land* of Saxony-Anhalt saw the electoral crushing of the incumbent Social Democrats—considered a harbinger of defeat for Gerhard Schröder in September. And in March, the Portuguese Socialists unexpectedly lost power to a conservative coalition that includes the immigrant-baiting People's Party. Portugal thus becomes the fifth European country in which an extreme-right party is part of government, joining Italy, Austria, Denmark and Turkey (where the presence of the MHP—with its fascist accents—in the ruling coalition is holding up Turkey's entry into the European Union).

In Slovakia, the ultra-nationalist SNS of former prime minister Vladimir Meciar is mounting in the polls after a cosmetic political facelift (and thanks in part to Orban's threats). And even in the normally tolerant Netherlands, the resignation en masse of Socialist Prime Minister Wim Kok's coalition government over the Srebrenica affair creates even more fertile ground for the parliamentary ticket led by openly gay xenophobic demagogue Pim Fortuyn in the upcoming Dutch elections, which will undoubtedly see him enter into parliament with a bloc of seats large enough to become the balance of power.

Europe's turn to the right continues with a vengeance. ■





# Excavating the What really happened

By Charmaine Seitz

JENIN, THE WEST BANK

**T**he story of the Jenin refugee camp is now one of picking up the pieces. The black faux-leather child's slipper left on a mound of rubble. Wide slabs of concrete cascading in mid-collapse from houses shaved in half. Living rooms opened like dollhouses, a father's portrait still hanging on the wall.

When the Israeli army entered Jenin refugee camp on April 3, it entered what it calls the "capital of the suicide bombers." What remains in the camp of 13,000 people is a scene that U.N. officials are describing as "horrific."

Dozens of people swarm over the dusty hillside of the hardest-hit area of the camp, pointing to the ground and naming each of the homes below. Underneath the thin topsoil made by recent traffic lie several floors of houses yet to be excavated. "Most of the places you walk, you are walking straight through someone's living room, bedroom or kitchen—it is just flattened," says Norwegian Red Cross worker Baar Strand, adding a bit cautiously, "We call it Ground Zero. It is that kind of scene."

Israeli bulldozers demolished homes, then piled that rubble several meters high. The smell of dead bodies rises as the sun beats down. "We know where they are by the smell," says one man, intent in his hunt for the dead. In the space of a few hours, the decayed bodies of a newborn baby and adolescent girl are found, recorded as "Jane Does" in a notebook and taken to the morgue.

No one yet knows how many people died here in Jenin. The Israeli death toll in the vicious fight for the camp was 23 soldiers. Workers here have identified 50 Palestinian bodies. "So far, we have only scratched the surface of that part," Strand says. "How many? I have no idea, but there will be some more."

It is this scene of devastation, and the stories told by the survivors, that has Palestinians calling what happened in Jenin a "massacre." Aid and human rights agencies are still waiting for

more information before weighing in on that charge, which Israel bitterly contests. But in an April 23 press conference, Amnesty International charged that "evidence compiled indicates that serious breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law were committed, including war crimes."

The charges stem from evidence that the Israeli army systematically denied ambulance crews from treating the wounded in the camp. For 13 days, camp residents were without electricity and water in an area completely surrounded by Israeli troops. Further, some survivors have told stories of men being executed in the narrow alleyways of the camp. Until April 15, the press was not allowed access to the camp to independently verify the stories making their way to the outside world.

**T**hirty-four-year-old medic Haitham Weiss is trying to catch some shut-eye in the back of his ambulance, standing by for anyone injured on the still dangerous scene. He was here when the Israeli tanks moved in, and, by the time they left, he was the only medic in the field. An Italian passport gave Weiss some protection during repeated Israeli searches of his ambulance. Weiss vehemently denies Israeli claims that ambulances were given access to the camp but refused to enter. He says, "They would give us permission, then videotape us entering the camp, then shoot at us so we would have to go back."

On the edges of the camp, Weiss points out two homes used as search areas for passing ambulance crews. When Weiss did manage to pick up two injured men, they were arrested in the back of his ambulance. "The first two guys I brought back from the camp, they took them," he says. "It was all for nothing. One of them had cuts in his hand and leg, another was wounded in the head and back—critical injuries." He does not know what happened to them.

At a nearby U.N. office, the women congregate. They are looking for their men. "My son is in jail," says Maritva Hawashi, a veil tied loosely over silvery hair. "But people don't know





CHRIS HONDROS / GETTY

# Crimes of War

## Committed in Jenin?

where their families are. Until we know where they are, we won't know how many people are dead."

Hawashi says that she and more than 20 of her family members spent days fleeing from home to home, outrunning Israeli bulldozers. They were afraid to run into the streets, but afraid, too, to leave their homes. "They hit us first with airplanes," she says and describes her family huddling in the dark on the ground floor. "We didn't go out, but in the morning, when we woke up, we found they were bulldozing the house next to us."

She says that at no time was her family warned by the army to leave. Terrified, they fled to a neighbor's. "There was shooting, but we didn't know where it was coming from—mostly there were missiles coming from above." Even so, when they felt the bulldozer pressing against the house's outer walls, the family ran outside. The house crumpled behind them.

They fled to another house, further up the hill. Missiles rained down on the camp until the next morning. In that house, there were also armed men. "I'm not going to lie," Hawashi says candidly. "In the morning we were drinking tea with them, when there was a blow to the wall next to us. Some of us said, 'Let's get out,' but others didn't want to."

Hawashi and about 20 others "surrendered," waving white cloth in the air. Hawashi describes how a tank marched her and dozens of others, including men stripped to their underwear, closer to the town. "They made us take off our scarves and walk in front of the soldiers," she says. "I think they wanted to know if there were any men in the group dressed as women."

Israel says the battle in Jenin was a dirty fight, in which Palestinians rigged with bombs threw themselves at troops to inflict as much damage as possible. "This place was not civilian, rather a center of terror," said Maj. David Tzengan at a press conference. "We are talking about 400 terrorists. This camp sent many suicide bombers. Thirty percent of the suicide bombers to date came from this camp."

He says that the army spared Palestinian civilians by entering the camp with ground troops. "From a military perspective, it would have been very easy to bomb the camp from the sky. The army went from house to house so as not to harm civilians."

In the most costly incident, 13 Israeli soldiers were killed when they walked into an ambush, tripping a fuse for explosives and then coming under heavy Palestinian fire. Israeli accounts of the battle and the pathways evident in the camp tell of a difficult fight on its edges, until Israeli bulldozers simply pushed through the homes, forcing the Palestinian armed men into the camp's heart.

Palestinians do not contest the account of a fierce battle. Reportedly, the armed men numbered nearly 200 and included fighters from outside the camp. During the fighting, Hamas official Jamal Abu Haija told a Qatar news station: "This one square kilometer camp has embarrassed this Israeli government over the past eight days of resistance. The fighters have decided to fight to the last man."

Israeli army lawyers claim that Jenin refugee camp was so sewn up with terrorists that it was no longer a civilian center subject to international humanitarian law. Their argument is that civilians remained in the camp because they were actually being held hostage by ruthless Palestinian fighters.

But medic Weiss gives another reason for why these refugee women and children did not leave. When rescue workers were finally given access to the camp—five days after the fighting was over—he was walking through when he spotted an old woman tucked back into the only undamaged corner of her home. "I went to her and said, 'Please, auntie, will you leave with me?' I had to raise my voice so that she could hear me."

But the woman refused, despite Weiss' warnings that she was in danger. "Let them demolish the house on my head," she told me. "I don't want to make the same mistake that I made before." This woman, like many of the camp residents, fled her home inside what is now Israel in 1948. When Weiss picked her up to carry her out of the house, the woman, nearly blind with age, began clawing at him.

Just as Israelis have their massacres—this year's Passover massacre, in which 28 died after a suicide bomber detonated himself in a Netanya Hotel, or the Hebron massacre where Jewish residents were killed by angry Arab mobs in 1929—Palestinians, too, can cite a history of ruthless, unwarranted killing. In April 1948, Jewish forces entered the village of Deir Yassin on the Jerusalem outskirts and killed some 100 men, women and children. The incident caused mass panic among Palestinians as the Jewish underground launched its bid for statehood. One of the results was the beginning of the Palestinian refugee crisis; some 3.5 million Palestinians remain stateless.

Israel insists that its army did not commit a "massacre" in Jenin—not in the sense of My Lai, when U.S. troops rounded up hundreds of Vietnamese villagers in a ditch, mowed them down, then buried them in a mass grave. "Such a massacre clearly did not take place in Jenin," Tel Aviv University professor Tanya Reinhart wrote in a recent column. "No Palestinian source ever described the facts this way."

What is being alleged is that far too many civilian deaths resulted from specific and systematic practices on the part of the Israeli army. "Given the deplorable and unprecedented refusal to allow international relief organizations into the camps while people were slowly dying in the rubble of their wounds and thirst, the onus is definitely on the state of Israel to account for the missing thousands of refugees who lived in that camp until a few weeks ago," an unnamed, high-level U.N. official told the *London Independent*.

The official continued: "I have not met one person in the international community who had any other explanation for

this refusal other than the fact that they were hiding a war crime, in fact, two war crimes: the mass killing and the denial of humanitarian relief."

Allegations of Palestinian civilians and fighters being shot in cold blood have surfaced, too. The *Independent* has published a detailed investigation describing numerous cases in which civilians in the camp were deliberately shot and killed by Israeli troops.

In the camp, Palestinians scabble at the hard dirt, climbing in and out of cement crevices, looking for the dead and their belongings. The United Nations estimates that 4,000 camp residents have been left homeless here. Highly unstable munitions from missiles and mines are strewn throughout the area, accidentally detonating at least once a day. The lack of visible foreign assistance to the residents is striking. International relief organizations say they have now suspended their digging efforts until the arrival of a U.N. fact-finding mission some time next week. The only foreign rescue teams visible—Strand and his crew—have left. A standing wall expresses Palestinian disgust with their own regional kin: "The Arab leaders are dogs."

But as the camp picks up the wreckage and unearths more, Israelis, too, will have some misfit puzzle parts to wrestle with. "The point is that they were inside the houses," an anonymous reservist told the weekend magazine of Israel's most popular newspaper, *Yedioth Aharonot*. "The last days, the majority of those who came out of the houses were old people, women and children, who were there the whole time and absorbed our fire. These people were not given any chance to leave the camp, and we are talking about many people." ■

# Sharon's Best Weapon

## The left must confront anti-Semitism head-on

By Naomi Klein

Something new went on in Washington in the middle of April. A demonstration against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund was joined by an anti-war march, as well as a demonstration against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. In the end, all the marches joined together in what organizers described as the largest Palestinian solidarity demonstration in U.S. history, 75,000 people by some estimates.

On Sunday night, I turned on my television in the hopes of catching a glimpse of this historic protest. I saw something else instead: triumphant Jean-Marie Le Pen celebrating his new found status as the second most popular political leader in France. Ever since, I've been wondering whether the new alliance displayed on

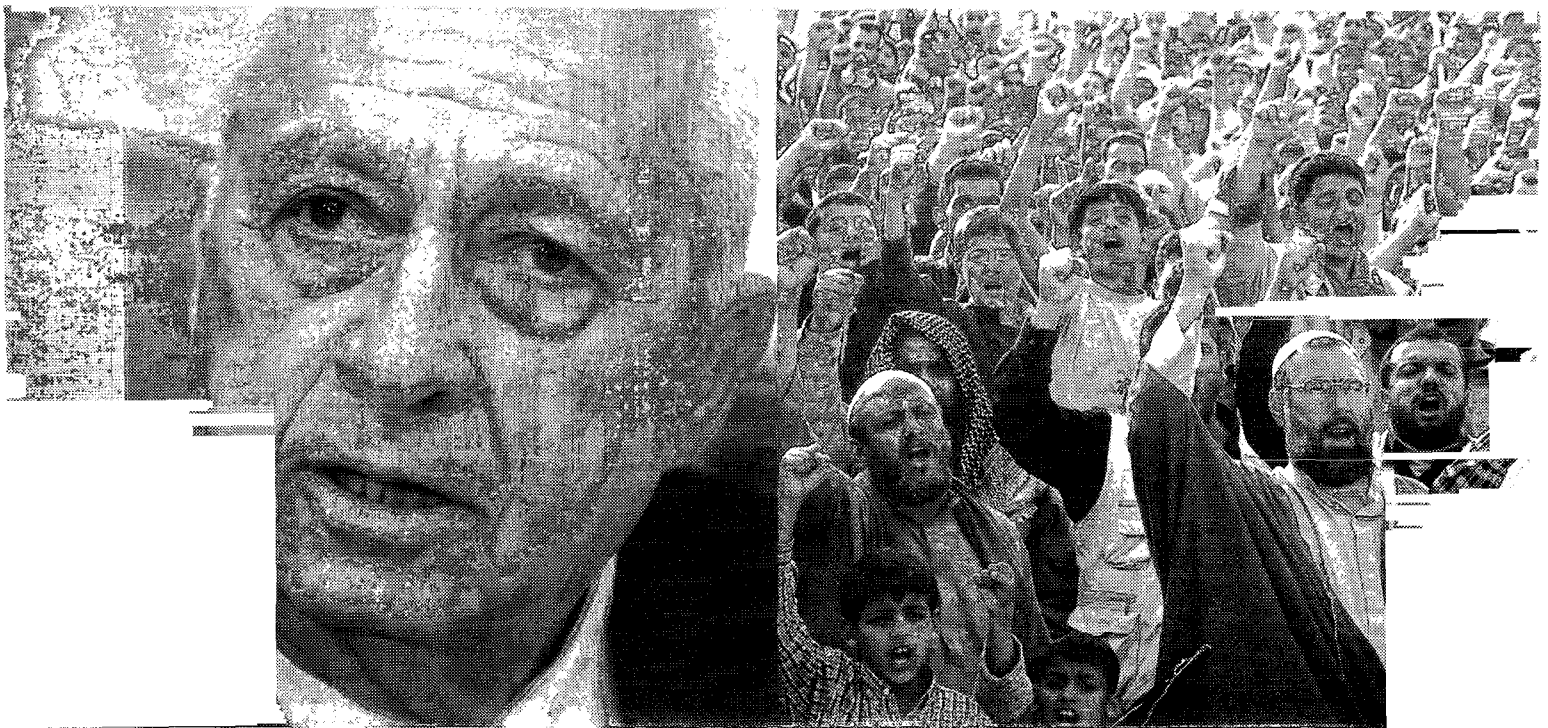
the streets of Washington can also deal with this latest threat.

The convergence that took place in Washington last weekend was long overdue. Despite easy labels like "anti-globalization," the trade-related protests of the past three years have all been about self-determination: the right of people everywhere to decide how best to organize their societies and economies, whether that means introducing land reform in Brazil, or producing generic AIDS drugs in India, or resisting an occupying force in Palestine. When hundreds of globalization activists began flocking to Ramallah to act as "human shields" between Israeli tanks and Palestinians, the theory that has been developing on the streets outside trade summits was put into concrete action. Bringing that courageous spirit

back to Washington, where so much Middle Eastern policy is made, was the next logical step.

But when I saw Le Pen beaming on TV, arms raised in triumph, some of my enthusiasm drained away. There is no connection whatsoever between French fascism and the "free Palestine" marchers in Washington (indeed the only people Le Pen's supporters seem to dislike more than Jews are Arabs). And yet I couldn't help thinking about all the recent events I've been to where anti-Muslim violence was rightly condemned, but no mention was made of attacks on Jewish synagogues, cemeteries and community centers. Or about the fact that every time I log onto activist news sites like *indymedia.org*, which practice "open publishing," I'm confronted with a string of Jewish conspiracy





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ABID KATIB / GETTY

theories about September 11 and excerpts from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

The globalization movement isn't anti-Semitic, it just hasn't fully confronted the implications of diving into the Middle East conflict. Most people on the left are simply choosing sides. In the Middle East, where one side is under occupation and the other has the U.S. military behind it, the choice seems clear. But it is possible to criticize Israel while forcefully condemning the rise of anti-Semitism. And it is equally possible to be pro-Palestinian independence without adopting a simplistic "pro-Palestinian/anti-Israel" dichotomy, a mirror image of the good-versus-evil equations so beloved by President George W. Bush.

Why bother with such subtleties while bodies are still being pulled out of the rubble in Jenin? Because anyone interested in fighting Le Pen-style fascism or Sharon-style brutality has to deal with the reality of anti-Semitism head-on. The hatred of Jews is a potent political tool in the hands of both the right in Europe and in Israel. For Le Pen, anti-Semitism is a windfall, helping spike his support from 10 percent to 17 percent in a week.

For Ariel Sharon, it is the fear of anti-Semitism, both real and imagined, that is the weapon. Sharon likes to say that he stands up to terrorists to show he is not afraid. In fact, his policies are driven by fear. His great talent is that he fully understands the depths of Jewish fear of another Holocaust. He knows how to draw parallels between Jewish anxieties about anti-Semitism and American fears of terrorism. And he is an expert at harnessing all of it for his political ends.

The primary, and familiar, fear that Sharon draws on, the one that allows him to claim all aggressive actions as defensive ones, is the fear that Israel's neighbors want to drive the Jews into the sea. The secondary fear Sharon manipulates is the fear among Jews in the Diaspora that they will eventually be driven to seek safe haven in Israel. This fear leads millions of Jews around the world, many of them sickened by Israeli aggression, to shut up and send their checks, a down payment on future sanctuary.

The equation is simple: The more fearful Jews are, the more powerful Sharon is. Elected on a platform of "peace through security," Sharon's administration could barely hide its delight at Le Pen's ascendancy, immediately calling on French Jews to pack their bags and come to the promised land.

For Sharon, Jewish fear is a guarantee that his power will go unchecked, granting him the impunity needed to do the unthinkable: send troops into the Palestinian Authority's education ministry to steal and destroy records; bury children alive in their homes; block ambulances from getting to the dying.

Jews outside Israel now find themselves in a tightening vice: The actions of the country that was supposed to ensure their future safety are making them less safe right now. Sharon is deliberately erasing distinctions between the terms "Jew" and "Israeli," claiming he is fighting not for Israeli territory, but for the survival of the Jewish people. And when anti-Semitism rises at least partly as a result of his actions, it is Sharon who is positioned once again to collect the political dividends.

And it works. Most Jews are so frightened that they are now willing to do anything to defend Israeli policies. So at my neighborhood synagogue, where the humble façade was just badly scarred by a suspicious fire, the sign on the door doesn't say, "Thanks for nothing, Sharon." It says, "Support Israel ... now more than ever."

There is a way out. Nothing is going to erase anti-Semitism, but Jews outside and inside Israel might be a little safer if there was a campaign to distinguish between diverse Jewish positions and the actions of the Israeli state. This is where an international movement can play a crucial role. Already, alliances are being made between globalization activists and Israeli "refuseniks," soldiers who refuse to serve their mandatory duty in the occupied territories. And the most powerful images from Saturday's protests were rabbis walking alongside Palestinians. But more needs to be done. It's easy for social justice activists to tell themselves that since Jews already have such powerful defenders in Washington and Jerusalem, anti-Semitism is one battle they don't need to fight. This is a deadly error. It is precisely because anti-Semitism is used by the likes of Sharon that the fight against it must be reclaimed.

When anti-Semitism is no longer treated as Jewish business, to be taken care of by Israel and the Zionist lobby, Sharon will be robbed of his most effective weapon in the indefensible and increasingly brutal occupation. And as an extra bonus, whenever hatred of Jews diminishes, the likes of Jean-Marie Le Pen shrink right down with it. ■

# Every One of Us Has a Teaspoon

## A plan to bring peace to the land of Israel

By Amos Oz

**W**hat can ordinary people do when they face an enormous fire? They can try to flee the flames, abandoning to their fate all those who either cannot run or have nowhere to run to. They can stand around and moan. They can blame others. And they can also fill the teaspoons they hold in their hands with water, over and over again, and splash it on the blaze.

Every one of us has a teaspoon.

During these days, every man and woman of peace must draw water—at least enough to fill the spoons they hold—and pour it on the fire: make their voices heard, object to war crimes by either side, help the victims of these war crimes; demonstrate, persuade, write, debate, garner support for reasonable compromise, oppose the continuation of the Israeli occupation and the Islamic/anti-Semitic campaign for Israel's extermination. The spoon in the ordinary person's hand is truly very small, and the fire large indeed—but even so they must use it. In Israel, and in Palestine as well, there must be a “teaspoon muster,” joined by every person willing to do their utmost to halt the wheels of the repression, the killing, the retaliation, and the retaliation for retaliation.

**O**n the Israeli side, it is best to talk not of “unilateral separation,” but specifically of an Israeli initiative to end the occupation, for the defense of the state of Israel. Today, the majority of the Israeli public can be mobilized to topple the settlers' government and elect in its stead a coalition with realistic positions. All this is to be based on a plan. If the Palestinian leadership agrees to this plan, all the better; but this plan's great advantage is that it can be implemented even if the Palestinian leadership remains neck-deep in belligerency, or prisoner in the hands of the forces of *jihad*.

- Israel will end the occupation of the Palestinian population, and will set up a closed, fortified line in accordance with demographic reality—a line not the same as the Green Line, but adjacent to it—that will include no occupied Palestinian population. The permanent Israel-Palestine borders will be determined through negotiation, with the Palestinian leadership proving, by its deeds, that it has renounced the Islamic campaign to annihilate Israel.
- Israel will agree to the immediate establishment of a Palestinian state in the populated Palestinian areas, even if this state arises before a peace treaty is signed between the sides.

Militarily and morally, it will be easier for Israel to face an enemy state than to continue fighting a cluster of armed gangs.

- Israel will morally acknowledge that it played a role in bringing about the Israeli-Palestinian tragedy. At the same time, it will demand of every decent person that he acknowledge the role of the Arab countries and the Palestinians in this tragedy.

The calamity of the Palestinian refugees is one of the origins of the violence, the hatred and the terror. Israel must accept no solution that does not include the human, economic and political rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees—not within Israel's borders, but in their homeland, Palestine—through international and Israeli participation in the task of rehabilitation.

- A comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Arab war must be sought not only between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, but also, and perhaps primarily, between Israel and the Arab League (which perhaps has the power to restrain displays of Palestinian extremism). The Saudi plan, some of whose elements were adopted by the Arab League, can serve as a point of departure—but definitely not as the finish line—for negotiations between Israel and the League on a comprehensive solution to the Israel-Arab war.

- A unilateral Israeli move to end the occupation, including the dismantling of the vast majority of the settlements, would come about only if the burden of minimizing the danger that Israeli society is being asked to face is shouldered by those who demand that Israel carry out such a move in the absence of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. The condition for ending the occupation will not be some paper signed by Yasser Arafat, but a solid agreement concretely linking Israel with NATO and the European Union, so as to deter the promoters of the Islamic holy war and to lay to rest once and for all the dream of eliminating Israel—and also to ensure that the end of the occupation will not be a shot in the arm

encouraging those who are inflamed with warmongering Arab nationalism, and will not enable them to attack Israel after it relinquishes its control over the Palestinians.

Around such a plan as this, it will be possible to consolidate a majority of the public, a majority in the next elections, and perhaps even a majority in the current Knesset—a majority that consists of the left, the center and the more pragmatic elements of the moderate right. ■

Amos Oz's novel *The Same Sea* has just been published in paperback.

During these days, every man and woman of peace must draw water—at least enough to fill the spoons they hold—and pour it on the fire.



# Crossing the Threshold

## Machsom Watch keeps an eye on Israeli checkpoints

By Mark Dow

In mid-March, as I walked toward a military post between the Israeli and Palestinian sections of the West Bank town of Hebron, the Israeli soldier on duty good-naturedly mocked my cautious approach. "This isn't Colombia," he said in English. "We don't just shoot people."

A few days later, an Israeli soldier shot out the rear tire on my Palestinian taxi because he didn't want me videotaping at the Kalandia checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah.

I had watched as two Israeli soldiers near the same spot, the previous week, aimed their weapons toward the queue of pedestrians and vehicles at Kalandia. One shouted in Hebrew at a Japanese cameraman who was idly taking snapshots while he waited for clearance to pass. The cameraman's driver told me they had been waiting an hour for the soldiers to get clearance from their superiors. Soon the cameraman's small truck, with "TV" written with masking tape in giant letters on the side, would be waved through.

At the head of the line, with no prospects of such luck, a delivery truck still waited, loaded with dairy products. The driver told me he had been there four hours. He said a delivery from Ramallah to Gaza, which should take a few hours, had taken him two full days. A teen-age boy just back from Brooklyn didn't have any urgent errands, but he was annoyed that his U.S. green card couldn't get him through.

Long before the recent invasions, of course, at checkpoints scattered throughout the Occupied Territories and Jerusalem, Israeli military personnel have controlled entry and exit to Israeli and Palestinian areas through an elaborate system of entry permits and identification cards. Most of those crossing, legally or illegally, are workers. It is telling that Palestinians use the Hebrew word *machsom* for checkpoint, even when they are speaking Arabic.

Machsom Watch is an organization of Israeli women who, since the start of the second *intifada* in September 2000, have taken turns gathering twice a day at the Kalandia checkpoint north of Jerusalem, and at the calmer checkpoint south of the city on the way to Bethlehem (and less often at half a dozen others). On a windy and cold morning in March, I accompanied five members of Machsom Watch to the Jerusalem-Bethlehem checkpoint. There were no gunshots that morning; the problems were more banal.

As the women arrived, one Palestinian man approached to report that soldiers had just driven another man into a nearby valley and beaten him. So one woman calmly recorded vehicle numbers on all the jeeps she could see. A few minutes later, she



QUIQUE KIENZENBAUM / GETTY

and her colleagues would patiently intervene with soldiers who had "lost" the indispensable ID cards belonging to a half dozen Palestinian men waiting for hours in the cold.

An IDF spokesman impatiently suggested that I refrain from judging soldiers at Kalandia, and he has a point. The young men with automatic weapons were obviously tense and afraid. But why were they there at all? Even before Israel's recent invasion, the checkpoints were not simple border crossings. According to an April report from Machsom Watch, they have constituted "part of a deliberate siege of the Palestinian population."

Of course, Israel has real security issues, but the repression enacted at checkpoints does not serve them. Since

September 2000, according to Machsom Watch, the control of civilian movement and livelihoods was tightened even though it is "contrary to international law [and] is inhumane, immoral and ineffective in preventing terror attacks." This "noose" prevents sick people from getting to doctors, teachers and students from getting to schools, and families from getting together.

When Machsom Watch activists challenged soldiers about keeping Palestinian workers detained for so long after their identities had been checked, they were told, "If we give them back the documents earlier, the workers will infiltrate again." In other words, the report concludes, "the job of the soldiers was to ensure that the laborers would lose a day's work, and they knew it."

The report (available by contacting [y\\_kl@netvision.net.il](mailto:y_kl@netvision.net.il)) covers the situation up to January, providing essential context for the more recent, extreme humiliations and violations that have occurred. One watcher records an incident in which groups of Palestinian men trying to evade the checkpoint are caught in the adjoining valley by Israeli forces. A shot is fired. "The laborers fled for their lives ... and we chased after the gunman." At a meeting with the soldiers, the commander and his officers insisted that "Machsom Watch is a naive (if bold) group of bleeding-heart liberals who do not understand where they live."

Or understand all too well. "So many Israelis cannot think logically about this situation because there's so much hatred," Nava Elishar told me at the Bethlehem crossing, her scarf whipping in the chilly wind. Elishar was born in Haifa to German and Austrian parents; she is married to the son of Iraqi Jews, a man held as a prisoner of war by Egypt in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. He later tells me that some of their friends now consider them traitors because of their opinions in the midst of horrific, almost daily attacks by suicide bombers on Israeli civilians.

But Elishar, a computer systems analyst, overcomes the artificial divides by monitoring more than checkpoints. "I'm able to monitor my mind as if I'm somebody else ... as if I was the other side." That doesn't mean she has illusions about her identity. Back home in Gilo, after we share a breakfast that her husband learned to cook in the army, she finishes addressing her youngest son's bar mitzvah invitations.

Today, at what used to be the Bethlehem checkpoint, "No one goes in, no one goes out," says Maya Rosenfeld, principal author of the April report and of the forthcoming book *Facing the Occupation*. The checkpoints have become military bases. Ramallah and Bethlehem remain under curfew. Some residents of Bethlehem, caught on the Israeli side when the new war started, have taken refuge in the nearby Tantur Ecumenical Institute, a Christian study center built on Vatican-owned land, which has extra-territorial status.

Rosenfeld is not optimistic. "This invasion is a catastrophe, and it is hard to think that any kind of 'routine' will be re-established." The divides that her group has been crossing will be

more entrenched than ever. "If you would have told an average Israeli three years ago that Israel will bombard the West Bank, he would have never believed you," Rosenfeld wrote in a recent e-mail. "The point is that once the impossible has become a fact on the ground, most people tend to defend it"—the army's actions, that is—"probably because they fear that otherwise their entire world will be completely destabilized. The threshold that has to be crossed by most people is quite huge."

She still believes that groups like Machsom Watch can help build the necessary bridges. The women of Machsom Watch have continued going to these checkpoints, but are severely limited in what they can do. "We just stand there for a while," says Rosenfeld, "to make sure that the army is aware of our presence—or more correctly, that the army is reminded that we are still on the watch and that we shall return." ■

**Mark Dow** is a poet, freelance writer and co-editor (with David R. Dow) of *Machinery of Death: The Reality of America's Death Penalty Regime*. He can be reached at [mdow@igc.org](mailto:mdow@igc.org).

# One Radical Rabbi

By Nicholas Jubber

**T**hough the extremes of Israeli Merkava tanks and Palestinian suicide bombers dominate the political climate of the Middle East, the middle ground still boasts a small enclave of survivors. One of the foremost Israeli activists working for common understanding is Rabbi Arik Ascherman, executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights, a group of 90 religious Jews from every denominational background that protests human rights abuses. Since the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2000, Rabbis for Human Rights has come to represent an apparent paradox: a religious organization that champions peace in a region where religious leaders are more often heard preaching war.

The Harvard-educated Pennsylvanian is no stranger to paradox. Few rabbis are as popular with Palestinians, or so loathed by the Israeli far-right, as Arik Ascherman. He has received death threats from right-wing Israelis for his activities in the Occupied Territories, where he has stood in front of Israeli bulldozers targeting Palestinian houses and olive groves and protested against the construction of Jewish settlements on land annexed by Israel during the 1967 war.

"We call it civil disobedience," Ascherman explains as he rests his sinewy frame in his West Jerusalem office. Stacks of pamphlets and bags full of old clothes destined for Bedouin Arabs crowd the desks. "It's very hands-on," he says. "One day, I'll be



**Rabbi Arik Ascherman**

standing in front of a bulldozer, the next day I'm lobbying in the Knesset. We're pretty middle-of-the-road: just people who by taking their beliefs to their logical conclusion have done some very radical things."

One of Rabbis for Human Rights' primary principles is its objection to violence on either side of the conflict. "I was in the Balata refugee camp [near Nablus] when Israeli tanks were there," Ascherman says. "They were shooting at ambulances. Many organizations, both Israeli and international, have asked the IDF to prove that there are militants inside the ambulances. But they consistently wouldn't answer, or said it was a mistake, or gave pictures of vans—not ambulances."

He says that Israeli society has historically been tolerant of dissent and accustomed to a lively debate and its accompanying civil disobedience. But Ascherman worries about the double standard involved in the treat-

ment of Palestinian demonstrators as dangerous criminals but Israeli protesters such as himself as tolerated lobbyists. "Generally, I'm not mistreated," he says. "But there have been a couple of cases where I've been beaten by the army."

In spite of this violence, Rabbis for Human Rights co-operates with Palestinian organizations like the Palestinian Land Defense Committee and Israeli Arabs. "It's the Palestinians who continue co-operating with us who are the real heroes," he said. "Many are having to work against the flow of what's happening on the Palestinian street."

Part of Ascherman's motivation is his desire to stem this flow. "How many times have I gone to see a house demolished," he exclaims, "and had the same conversation: Our 10-year-old son has just seen his home torn down or his parents humiliated—and the son says, 'I want to be a terrorist.'"

But the rabbi is also worried about the effect of violence on Israeli society. "During the first *intifada*," he explains, "studies linked the activities of soldiers in the territories and domestic violence. This is corrupting the moral character of our society: violence begets violence."

Ascherman is pessimistic about the short-term prospects for peace, but he hasn't lost hope yet. "Polls continue to show that most Palestinians want a negotiated settlement," he says. "We're in for a cycle of violence until we get it out of our system. The extremists know how to play each other like virtuoso violinists." ■



# Too Cruel For School

## Students stand up for workers rights

By David Moberg

**O**n campuses across the country, a groundswell of student organizing focused on workers rights has become the dominant stream of campus politics after a period when identity politics held center stage. Born out of critiques of globalization, the new labor-oriented student movement has turned its global outrage inward, focusing on workers in the United States and, especially, at the universities themselves.

The new interest in labor issues started with campaigns against sweatshops, especially providers of university-logo clothing. But the anti-sweatshop movement, while still growing and gaining sophistication, has also turned toward support for exploited workers in the United States, from New Era cap makers on strike since last summer to farm workers picketing Taco Bell. Students are also a growing force behind unionization on campus, such as food service workers at Sodexho, and living-wage campaigns for university employees or contractors—given a big boost by a sit-in last spring at Harvard (and simultaneously, though less publicized, at the University of Connecticut). Increasingly, students who work at universities—especially graduate teaching and research assistants, but even undergraduate resident assistants—are also organizing themselves.

"There's been this explosion of student interest in labor issues," says Andrea Calver, the full-time liaison to the student movement on the staff of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE), which won a contract for Pitzer College food service workers in California last year with student support.

This academic year has seen "the biggest influx in a long time" of groups joining the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), says field coordinator Amber Gallup. About 40 new affiliates have boosted the organization's total to 109, but there are another 250 college chapters that are less formally linked to USAS. Meanwhile, the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP), a joint venture of the U.S. Student Association and Jobs with Justice, pulled together roughly 110 events for its third annual National Student Labor Day of Action on April 4, roughly double the number the first year.

The number of campus living-wage movements has tripled this year too, and a national tour of Harvard janitors and students, organized by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has sparked interest on roughly 80 campuses. Inspired by the organizing and legal victories of New York University teaching and research assistants, who negotiated their first contract in February,



Students, like these at Harvard, are the best hope for a union revival.

graduate student workers at Columbia, Brown, Yale, Harvard and other universities are at varied stages in their fights for union recognition. Teaching assistant organizing has also encouraged nascent organizing among non-tenured adjunct professors, such as 4,500 faculty at NYU who will be voting on union recognition.

Most progressive campus activists see themselves as advocates of social justice who have focused on labor organizing as a vehicle. "I just got interested in doing labor work because it's what took hold of me initially," says Tom Cogswell, a USAS organizer from Central Michigan University. "I could just as easily have got involved in doing environmental issues. The basic issue is there's no representation in the government and no respect for individual liberties and gross inequalities and institutionalized racism. I generally work for labor rights, but I see a larger issue at hand."

**S**tudents seem more interested in workers rights in large part because protests against corporate globalization have brought corporate power and economic issues to the forefront of their consciousness. But corporatization of the university has also driven student workers to organize and to critique university policies on everything from logo merchandise to subcontracting. Movements feed off a common spirit of "forcing universities to be moral actors, both in what they sell in bookstores or how they treat students or other employees," says SLAP coordinator Laura McSpeddon.

The evolution of the corporatized university has changed how students experience higher education. Like for-profit businesses, universities increasingly have subcontracted work, often resulting in fewer benefits, lower wages and less tolerable work regimens. The story for professors and janitors is remarkably parallel. Contingent academic workers—nontenured and part-

DARREN MCCOLLETER/NEWSMAKERS

time—made up a third of faculty in 1987 but comprise 46 percent now, and, according to one survey of humanities and social sciences, graduate students are 15 to 25 percent of all teachers.

The power of undergraduate students with a new consciousness about labor has made a huge difference for workers both on and off campus. "They've been leading, and we've been following," acknowledges Stephen Lerner of the SEIU, which represents janitors on 110 campuses. "At Harvard, they were way ahead of us."

The entrenched, conservative SEIU local leadership in Boston that had opposed the Harvard living-wage movement has since been removed. "In many cases, there's been stagnation and erosion of standards," says Lerner, architect of SEIU's successful Justice for Janitors organizing. "The upsurge in student activity changes the playing field. Our members get totally excited and much braver when students are working with them and administrators are nervous."

Similarly, a student campaign against Sodexho, a French multinational which is one of three global giants that dominate institutional food services, focused on its ownership of private prisons (which the company still operates in England and Australia, despite its divestiture from the Corrections Corporation of America). Vulnerable because of the campaign, Sodexho also faces further problems if it resists unionization of its workers by HERE. Recently the president of Xavier University in Ohio instructed Sodexho to recognize the union if a majority of workers sign union cards.

Importantly, workers rights campaigns are beginning to involve a wider range of campuses and a greater variety of students. At Ohio State, for example, black and women's student groups mobilized to support striking campus workers, mostly minority women, and then helped form a USAS anti-sweatshop group. At the University of Tennessee, where there was no union, students and campus workers have formed their own independent union, an indication that universities might be an important beachhead for organizing in the South.

Graduate student teaching and research assistants now are organized at more than 30 universities. The big breakthrough came in November 2000 when the National Labor Relations Board ruled that teaching assistants were indeed employees with the right to unionize, contrary to the continued arguments of universities that their teaching is simply part of their educational program. Brown and Columbia

have appealed recent elections that organizers are confident they've won on the same grounds. "We say to these universities, we're not going to let anyone slow down this organizing trend," says Julie Kushner of the United Auto Workers, which organized NYU, Brown and Columbia teaching assistants. "It's clear graduate students want a voice in the workplace. You're going to have to recognize this."

The University of Illinois has resisted state Supreme Court rulings that graduate student workers are employees, so teaching assistants this year have gone on strike and occupied buildings, finally pushing the university into negotiations. "It's only with direct action that they've agreed to work something out," says Illinois Federation of Teachers organizer Mike Stewart.

The graduate students are succeeding—and adjunct professors are getting a boost—in part because of the new awareness of workers rights issues among undergraduates. "The undergrads at NYU were there for us at every juncture," Kushner says. "They were the key to our success at Columbia as well."

Off-campus, the student anti-sweatshop movement has also scored significant victories. The Workers Rights Consortium, a monitoring organization covering 96 universities that grew out of the student movement, has conducted serious research on working conditions that has underpinned student campaigns against New Era (forced to negotiate after eight campuses suspended contracts) and Kuk Dong (where student pressure helped 500 Mexican workers win recognition of an independent union as well as pay and benefit hikes from the Korean-owned Nike contractor—since renamed Mex Mode). Following the lead of Occidental College, which contracted with a union shop in the

United States to manufacture its college logo clothing, a new unionized garment factory, called SweatX, is now bidding for the socially conscious apparel market.

University campuses have become one of the most important fronts for revitalization of the labor movement. But the new student activism does pose challenges for unions. As Craig Smith of the American Federation of Teachers notes, both the new campus unions and student groups "see themselves as part of a social movement to a more democratic, more just society."

Although some unions have worked closely with students, training and recruiting many leaders, and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has repeatedly joined campus protests, the challenge to the labor movement will be not simply to bring more of these new workers and supporters into the heart of the labor movement, but to transform the movement itself to incorporate the new movement's broad mandate for social justice. As Gallup says of the students, "They want to be organizers, not just foot soldiers." ■



## FLA Changes Its Ways

Just a year after sweatshop monitoring took off, an industry-friendly monitoring group has made major changes that signal a victory for the independence and transparency championed by its grassroots counterpart.

Put to shame by a string of successful monitoring visits by the student, labor and NGO-led Worker Rights Consortium, the Fair Labor Association's board of directors, which includes six apparel industry representatives, outlined new rules at its April meeting for conducting factory investigations and releasing monitoring results.

The new guidelines, pushed for by the board's university and college members, call for making surprise factory visits and posting monitoring results to the group's Web site. Previously, investigations were announced and results kept secret unless the affected companies chose to release them.

But the association will still certify a company as "sweat free" after independently auditing only 5 percent of its factories annually. Additionally, its reports won't reveal the factories accused of wrongdoing, but will disclose only the companies they produce for, in deference to corporations' desires to keep production locations secret.

— Mischa Gaus



# Words To Live By

By Benjamin Kunkel

Until recently, when a man died on the Mani peninsula in Greece he would be mourned by a professional. This woman—it was always a woman—would weep and shriek and then lament the man's passing in improvised, 15-syllable funeral verse. A particularly gifted dirge artist might be much in demand, and have to travel around the peninsula being freshly inconsolable.

The sexual division of labor has often assigned women the steady job of feeling sad, and as far as I can tell (those being the words with which to begin any discussion of Ben Marcus) the old association of femininity with grief forms the background to this strange and fascinating novel. *Notable American Women* concerns a sect of radical feminists calling themselves the Silentists and the revolution they work on a neatly arranged household of mother, father, daughter and son.

Sometimes an instruction manual, sometimes a family romance, sometimes a study of the effect of women's names upon their bearers ("There will be food for you if you

Yet the book abounds in red herrings—the monstrous figures of the narrator's parents are named after Marcus' own parents—and seems not to intend any serious comment on real-world feminism.



FINNERT

Part of Ben Marcus' comic genius is that he has written up his mythology not floridly and romantically, but in the language of the legal contract, the official history, the science text, the instruction manual. These are the driest of genres, and the joke is that they describe a world sodden with feeling.

Using the Marcus property for their compound, the Silentists have developed various methods of draining themselves of affect: strategic fainting, forgoing masculine consonants while speaking, a "love reduction" that can be "accomplished through the mimed slaughter of persons orbiting the woman's life." Another technique is to stuff "the head's hollow space (chub)" with cloth, wood and ice, objects meant to soak up or counteract warm, wet emotion; "but the resulting fabric waste, spoiled wood, or mouth water, all known as 'heart chaff'—marinated in the overflow of feelings, and bearing the impress of a woman's mouth and every consonant-bearing word (crack) she has ever uttered—becomes hazardous and should be disposed of properly."

"Marinated in the overflow of feelings"—this is plainly the Silentists' conception of language, and Ben Marcus' too. The novel begins with a long monologue by the interred father, and ends, circle-wise, with the wife's long harangue of the father as she is about to inter him. Mrs. Marcus would like Mr. Marcus to offer himself up to death so that young Ben might experience the strong emotions of a bereaved son, the better to understand and reject the intolerable burden of feelings. And Mr. Marcus—who at the start of the book has apparently read the rest of it—denounces his son as "a good candidate for a respectably necessary suicide" and the boy's writing as "entirely lacking in loyalty to the actual world."

These bookending chapters are the novel's strongest and most dynamic: exhibiting banned emotion, encroach-

Michael Marcus, the father buried alive in the family backyard, represents "men's language, the so-called weapon of the mouth," while the Silentists, including mother Jane Marcus, serve as the enemies of language and language's major side-effect, "The Having of Emotions."

In this novel, then, man and woman are psychological principles competing in a private mythology, like male Prometheus and female Asia uniting in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. For Shelley, it was the marriage of the opposed principles that mattered. Here it's their rancorous estrangement. Mother and father compete over "the so-called mind" of their son, who is at once an obedient male pupil of the Silentists and a writer—that is, a user of language and an emotion-monger.

## Notable American Women

By Ben Marcus

Vintage Contemporaries

243 pages, \$12.50

are Susan"), the book is also a deadpan history of imaginary anti-language feminism. According to this history, the Silentists emerged, like certain other strains of radical feminism, in the late '60s. They are the impossible obverse of the histrionic mourner, artist and audience of her woe. Their program is to eliminate emotions by devoting themselves to stillness and silence: a form of politicized catatonia.

ing on family taboo and imparting some drama to the fortunes of “a small measure of flesh called a child.” Elsewhere the family romance is obscured by the apparatus of fake history and homely science. But when the drama emerges it becomes evident that the book’s anxieties are just as much metafictional as they are Freudian:

My father read to me as a boy and I was mannered enough not to stop him. It was unbearable—book after book that failed to make or change me, my father’s lips twisting and stretching during a supposed story hour, massing a stream of nonsense inside his mouth. ... All languages are clearly alien and untrue, and, absent of so-called meaning, it is repeatedly clear that language is a social form of barely controlled weeping, a more sophisticated way to cry.

Ben Marcus’ account of language is torn between a sense of the impotence of words and a sense of their unmanageable power. So is his style itself, with many of its crucial terms—“mannered”—pivoting between malapropism and poetry. For the Silentists words create outer and inner weather, setting the world in motion. And the Marcuses’ experiments on their daughter with various women’s

names suggest that a person is just an epiphenomenon of what she is called. Looking back on Ben Marcus’ first book, the beautiful but doggedly obscure *Age of Wire and String*, its self-referential spheres of prose now seem to imply that, even where language comes close to escaping reference to a common world, the words are still a variety of tears. Indeed, the pain of incommunicable feeling seems to be just the painful feeling they are communicating.

Yet Ben Marcus’ metafictionalism, his extremely self-conscious and deliberately skewed language, also insists that printed words are only that. *Notable American Women’s* narrator tells us that “Good books should offer characters for fondling”—and here we begin to understand the sexual politics of the Silentists. Abandoning motion and emotion, they are fictional characters on strike. They refuse to serve the fantasies of (male, fatherly) readers. Mrs. Marcus attempts to use her son to sire more Silentists, but to no avail. The matting of “antiemotionalists” fails to yield any new characters, to reproduce reality. In this way Ben Marcus has illustrated the irony of all metafiction: Language forfeits its power by boasting of it.

**T**hose, anyway, seem to be some of the themes of *Notable American Women*.

The book teems with incidental felicities and unspeakable intimacies, told slant in order to be told at all. But it is frustrating too. Marcus’ alternate universe gives the impression of being made up as it goes along. Techniques of emotion-minimization proliferate where not fully imagined, and toward the end of the book we find mother Marcus reading the newspaper—not a likely pastime for a Silentist. Moreover, the three chapters describing Ben’s sister under various names seem left over from a different conception of the novel. In our world emotions are largely a matter of thoroughness: The thing we have possessed or imagined most completely, and for the longest time, is what it will hurt us most to lose. The sketched quality of Marcus’ world finally militates against the emotions, making the Silentist project, with its horror of affect, harder to accept.

Still, the novel’s vision is strong and troubling—and perhaps less weird and private than first appears. Ben Marcus was born in 1967, which would put him in college during the American heyday of continental theory. His work becomes less odd in light of the vexed idea of language as something that both makes the world and doesn’t touch it, when we think of the signifier slipping free of the signified and the reader replacing the author. It was possible, several years ago, for an undergraduate to use the term “phallogocentrism” in deadly earnest—and if the Silentists aren’t against phallic language, then what are they?

Ben Marcus also belongs to the first generation after feminism—one to have seen the division of emotional labor become more equal and more confused. You can imagine Jacques Lacan saying about *Notable American Women* that it represents a fear of The Name of the Father. You can also imagine Robert Bly complaining that it depicts the agony of “the soft male” in the face of tough, liberated girlfriends and bashful dads. And you can imagine a dozen other plausible interpretations as well—only you would want each of them prefaced and concluded with the words *as far as I can tell*. The only sure thing is that Ben Marcus evades and solicits meaning in roughly equal measure. In the process he displays a violence of originality and a tenderness of intent rarely found in American writing. ■

**Benjamin Kunkel** writes for *Dissent* and the *Los Angeles Times*.



From *Recalling the Vote*, an exhibition at Fifty Crows Gallery in San Francisco of Dan Budnik’s photographs of Martin Luther King Jr.’s march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.



# Player Piano

By Richard Porton

**P**hotographed from a high angle, the hands of Erika Kohut—anti-heroine of Austrian director Michael Haneke's *The Piano Teacher*—

**The Piano Teacher**  
Directed by Michael Haneke

attack the keys of her cherished instrument with predatory glee. Unlike the dashing Chopin portrayed by Cornel Wilde in 1944's *A Song to Remember* or the cuddly schizophrenic virtuoso celebrated in *Shine*, Erika (Isabelle Huppert) is an autocratic pianist and instructor who lacks charm but revels in her apparently steely self-control.

Still living with her maniacally possessive mother (Annie Girardot), Erika's authoritarian character is unmistakably tied to her sexual frustration. While several seminal films discerned links between sexual repression and political authoritarianism during the '70s (Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* and Dusan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* were among the most noteworthy), Haneke stops short of placing his protagonist, both monstrous and strangely vulnerable, within the context of resurgent Austrian fascism.

Of course, this decision is partially determined by the film's status as an Austrian-French co-production featuring a Franco-German cast. And Haneke, known for offending his audience in restrained shockers such as *Benny's Video* and *Funny Games*, seems much more interested in Erika's fondness for furtive kinky sex than with protracted social commentary. While similarly claustrophobic and character-driven, the Elfriede Jelinek novel that inspired the film included fleeting glimpses of what the author termed contemporary "Viennese venom." The relatively faithful adaptation, featuring three of France's most distinguished actors, comes off as suffused with a heavier dose of Gallic irony. It is also not difficult to notice that the masterworks of high Romanticism by Schubert,

Schumann and Beethoven that enliven the soundtrack are, within this perverse context, rendered strangely sinister.

More a musical martinet than a traditional piano teacher, Erika finds relief from her overweening commitment to aesthetic discipline by frequenting local porn emporiums. The presence of a desirable—and desiring—woman in this male-dominated zone is in itself a provocation. The bulk of the narrative is bound up, however, with Erika's warped on-again, off-again seduction of a promising male student, Walter



The teacher finds her promising student both repellent and irresistible.

Klemmer (Benoît Magimel), whom she finds both repellent and irresistible.

**E**legantly photographed in a widescreen format and devoted to the cerebral treatment of sexual politics that has distinguished European art cinema since the '50s, Haneke insists that this superficially somber mood piece is in fact a parody of melodramatic conventions. It is clear that a ferocious brand of black humor frequently pinpoints the absurdities engendered by a preoccupation with sexual technique rather than genuine eroticism. A ludicrous—and genuinely creepy—sequence features Walter's horror after receiving a detailed missive from Erika listing her preferred methods of sexual humiliation.

In the final analysis, *The Piano Teacher* is less consumed with sex *per se* than it is with its protagonist's vulgar Nietzscheanism—her veneration of power and contempt for

outward displays of weakness. The most chilling example of this propensity involves a timid young female student's innocent flirtation with Walter. Ostensibly inflamed by jealousy, Erika furtively plants ground glass in the unsuspecting student's coat. This vicious act is emblematic of Erika's inescapable double bind—she loathes helplessness but is traumatized by self-loathing as she is forced to come to terms with her own insecurity. In the best Haneke manner, this realization reaches its zenith in a moment designed to make us undeniably queasy.

Several critics have complained that the film fails to capture the essentially feminist impetus of Jelinek's novel and turns Erika into a one-dimensional harridan. Yet what

Haneke characterizes as his more "objective" approach to the material yields certain benefits as well. He feels no need to signpost the fact that this mentally unstable musician is a product of a hierarchical society that provides little room for female autonomy. Without blatant editorializing, her plight speaks for itself.

Like many of Haneke's other films (and unlike his most nuanced work, last year's *Code Unknown*), *The Piano Teacher* is insistently, even obsessively, schematic.

At times, Erika emerges as less a full-fledged individual than an agglutination of symptoms. Given the Freudian specter that haunts this portrait of Viennese angst, it comes close to resembling a series of arid oedipal entanglements. Fortunately, Isabelle Huppert's superb performance prevents the narrative

**The presence of a desirable—and desiring—woman is itself a provocation.**

from degenerating into a lifeless case study. One of the most subtly effective actors in contemporary cinema, she is capable of conveying petulance, defiance, or pleasure with the slightest of gestures. While Haneke aims for a mood of chilly

detachment, Huppert warms up the screen with her fiery intelligence.

As a straightforward examination of psychopathology, *The Piano Teacher* is a qualified success. When Haneke moves into murkier and more pretentious terrain—implicitly claiming that high culture is the ultimate form of sublimation and making the audience uncomfortable about their own voyeuristic propensities—the film falls flat. Despite consider-

able bravura, Haneke's attack on bourgeois mores is far from Brechtian. Whetting the audience's appetite with a superficially "daring" form of titillation, they are doubtless more pleased than shocked to gawk at Huppert's Erika—the star of a freak show tailor-made for the carriage trade. ■

**Richard Porton** is a member of Cineaste's editorial board and the author of *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*.

## Back in Business

By Joshua Klein

**R**ecord sales are way down. Radio listeners are dwindling. If you believe the questionable claims of the Recording Industry Association of America, which enlists pity as a pointless weapon against would-be MP3 pirates and bootleggers, the music industry is in the midst of a dire recession unlike any it has seen in more than two decades.

Given the economic environment, you'd think record companies might be more inclined to take a few risks: If the old way seems to be failing, then perhaps the answer lies in a new way. Yet the major labels in particular appear as stodgy and stupid as ever, making the kinds of bad business decisions that invite more problems than viable solutions. The recent trials of the rock band Wilco perfectly encapsulate the

respectably, certainly offsetting the relatively modest recording and promotions costs accrued by the band. Plus, Wilco have



Wilco returns.

built such a dedicated fan base that their cross-country tours sell out handily. Yet when the band turned in its fourth album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* to Reprise (part of the AOL Time Warner juggernaut) it got a familiar refrain in lieu of gratitude and constructive feedback: "We don't hear a single."

**A**pparently this wasn't Wilco's first time butting heads with the suits. After completing their second album *Being There*, Wilco refused to trim the two-disc set down to satisfy the label's demands, and instead insisted that it be released not only as is, but at a budget price as well. Next came *Summerteeth*, an even more radical break with the band's alt-country roots that still stands as one of the best albums

of the '90s. Again, Reprise differed, sending the band back into the studio to polish up the disc in hopes of radio play.

None of this affected singer/songwriter Jeff Tweedy too terribly. He and the band continued to evolve on the road and in the studio, bookending *Summerteeth* with two successful albums of Woody Guthrie songs performed with Billy Bragg before preparing for album No. 4. Tweedy's evolution as a songwriter led to a parting of ways with longtime drummer Ken Coomer right before recording began. Coomer was replaced by Glenn Kotche, whose experimental cred matched that of out-rock maven Jim O'Rourke, who himself was brought in to engineer the album.

Initial reports last spring claimed *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* had more in common with early Pink Floyd than Gram Parsons, which might explain the reluctance of the label to foist the album upon the world. But when Wilco performed several of the new songs for a massive outdoor crowd at a Chicago Fourth of July festival last year—a performance that would turn out to be multi-instrumentalist Jay Bennett's last with Wilco—the fans embraced the fresh material as enthusiastically as they did the old. Sure, some songs were weird—the abstract "I Am Trying to Break Your Heart" was a lot harder to get a bead on than, say, Wilco's early anthem "Passenger Side"—but the *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* music was hardly the commercial suicide some suggested it would be.

While Wilco and the suits tussled over the album's release, copies of the disc were leaked onto the Internet and circulated among fans. Later the band itself posted the album on its own Web site, allowing anyone to stream the entire disc. Eventually Wilco won its way, or at least a way out: Reprise let them slip out of their contract without a fight.

But a funny thing had happened in the interim. By the time the band was free, the buzz surrounding *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* was deafening, stunning enough that Reprise tried to lure the group back even as Wilco fielded more than 30 offers from every stripe of label. After a long period of deliberation, Wilco chose the eclectic, artist-friendly and semi-independent Nonesuch imprint—itsself another tentacle of AOL Time Warner, which therefore effectively bought the album twice. Rumor has it that the man responsible for

**Yankee Hotel Foxtrot**  
Wilco  
Nonesuch Records

sheer lunacy that drives the publicly traded side of the industry, and chances are, after all the dust has settled, the band's story will reveal the full folly of their corporate handlers.

If critical acclaim translated to cash, Wilco would be richer than Michael Jackson. But even on a more realistic scale, Wilco seem like any record label's best friend. Wilco's three albums have sold



the Wilco debacle over at Reprise was, in industry terms, "dropped."

At last, a release date for the disc was set, nearly a year after it was originally scheduled. In the meantime, Wilco toured nearly nonstop, supporting an unreleased album with a string of sold-out shows. At a recent March date in Anaheim, California, Tweedy asked the crowd how many of them had downloaded *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. Seeing a sea of hands, perhaps a quarter of the audience, Tweedy seemed satisfied. "Good," he said. "Tell all your friends about it."

The power of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* could allow it to transcend the buzz and become the unlikely hit that many claimed Wilco could never have. At the Anaheim show, fans took in the new material, played almost in its entirety, with rapt silence. Kotche's subtle drumming gently propelled the beautiful "Jesus, etc." while Tweedy's cracked voice lent "Ashes of American Flags" as much poignancy as it would have been automatically accorded had the album been released, as was also once scheduled, on September 11. During the astoundingly

beautiful "Reservations," the album's closer, some people actually sobbed. With Leroy Bach replacing Bennett, the band capably drifted from the moody new material back through the pure pop of *Summerteeth* and the eclectic *Being There*.

"I still love rock 'n' roll," howled Tweedy at the end of "Misunderstood," as if reiterating a tacit belief that rock 'n' roll encompasses all kinds of music, much of it deemed uncommercial just because no one is willing to take a risk on it. But Wilco take the kinds of risks that labels should be embracing. For the amount of money Virgin spent to court and then drop Mariah Carey, for example, it could have signed 100 Wilcos, each profitable in its own right. The recording industry claims its profits dropped significantly over the past year, but that deficit can be accounted for only among the top-selling mega-acts. If the majors paid as much attention to the hundreds of other bands on their rosters, maybe they wouldn't be crying to a consumer base steadily taking its business elsewhere. ■

Joshua Klein, a freelance critic, also writes for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Washington Post*.

The constitutional scholar, Jack N. Rakove of Stanford University, seems supportive of Bellesiles' thesis. Score one for *Arming America*. The economic scholar, Gloria L. Main from the University of Colorado, accuses Bellesiles of undercounting guns in pre-Civil War America and making the guns sound more ineffectual than they probably were. But Main's counting, even if more accurate than Bellesiles', is nonetheless based on small samples of probate records. She effectively questions whether Bellesiles is as careful a researcher as an academic should be. She does not, however, invalidate his thesis.

The military historian, Ira D. Gruber of Rice University, also accuses Bellesiles of sloppy scholarship. Like Main, Gruber fails to shake the underpinnings of Bellesiles' thesis. The homicide historian, Randolph Roth of Ohio State University, says Bellesiles has not only undercounted guns, but also homicides attributed to gunfire. Yet, even if Roth is correct, the homicide-by-gun rates he posits are still lower than a lay person might expect within a gun culture.

In his reply, Bellesiles concedes that his methodology could have been better formulated, and that he made errors while recording handwritten information from previous centuries. That said, Bellesiles defends the thesis of his book.

My verdict, based on the *William and Mary* essays, previously published commentary on *Arming America*, Bellesiles' extensive Web site and a careful re-reading of the book itself: Bellesiles wins. To be sure, my original enthusiasm for the book has been dimmed by the imperfect methodology, the counting mistakes and Bellesiles' less-than-complete responses to certain allegations of error.

When Bellesiles and his publisher Knopf considered the criticisms to the hardcover edition, they decided to print the paperback edition without substantive revision. The ideal solution now would be to reprint the paperback edition with the inclusion of the *William and Mary* essays. ■

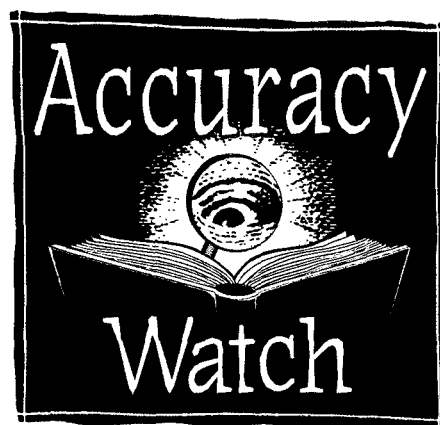
For readers who want to judge for themselves, the *William and Mary Quarterly* special issue is available for \$10 from subscription manager Peggy Manger, (757) 221-1124 or [pwmang@wm.edu](mailto:pwmang@wm.edu).

## No Smoking Gun

By Steve Weinberg

When the debate began two years ago about the accuracy of the book *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*, nobody knew that the denouement would come in a little-known scholarly journal called *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History and Culture*. The quarterly devotes 65 pages of its volume 59, No. 1 to the controversy spawned by author Michael Bellesiles, an Emory University history professor. (For a full explanation of the controversy, see "Gun Crazy," November 26, 2001.)

The quarterly commissioned four academics to critique Bellesiles' research, as well as giving Bellesiles space to reply. The academics are specialists in American constitutional, economic, military and homicide history. The debate revolves around Bellesiles' argument that the citizenry's pre-Civil War love for guns and the prevalence of guns has been exaggerated



in previous historical accounts. The context for the passionate disagreement is this: If far fewer Americans owned and loved guns than the conventional wisdom has it, perhaps then the Second Amendment intended the right to bear arms only for state militia members—and not the entire populace.

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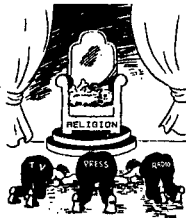
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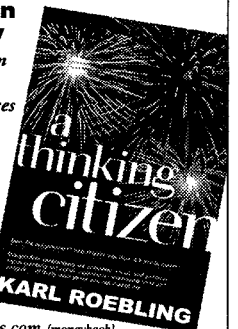
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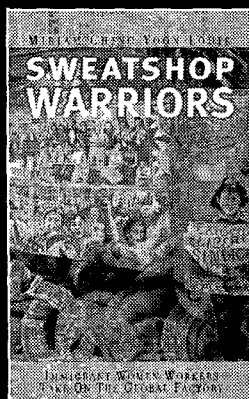
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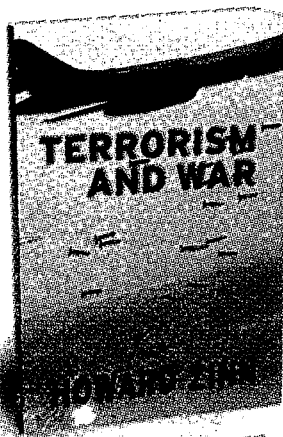
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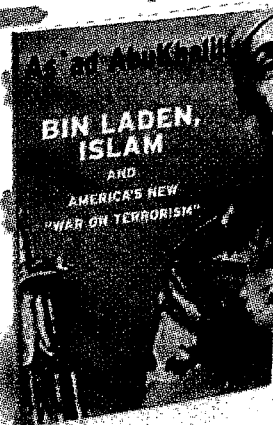
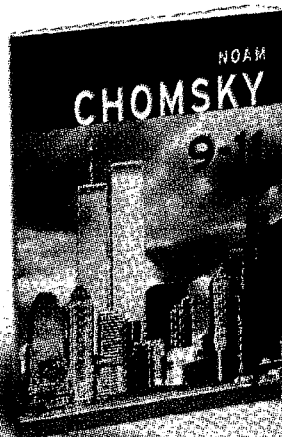
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